140-PAGE SPECIAL EDITION

World Soccer®

ONE WORLD, ONE GAME

SEPTEMBER 2007 £3.75

FREDDY ADU
"It's not easy being me"

MARTIN JOL
"My Spurs challenge"

FRANCK RIBERY
New king of the Bundeslig

Euro Club Guide 2007-08

The **UNMISSABLE** issue...
The **EXPERT** guide to
144 TEAMS in the
Champions League & UEFA Cup

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SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer
SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER ON PAGE 30

WELCOME to a special edition of *World Soccer*, dedicated to the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Cup. The season may end with a major international tournament, Euro 2008, but the preceding months will be dominated by club football. Even without the presence of Bayern Munich and Juventus in this season's Champions League, it's hard to escape the feeling that the competition will be won by one of the usual suspects. Even so, it is our duty to preview all the contenders in equal measure.

Our deadlines have been such that we went to press before the results of the qualifying rounds were known. We have therefore included teams in the Champions League section that will have been, by the time you read this, drawn in the UEFA Cup first round. Similarly, there are teams in our UEFA Cup guide that are already out of the competition. Such are the perils of producing a monthly magazine, but with the help of our correspondents across Europe we have produced our biggest ever guide to the European club competitions.

As with previous special editions, we've increased the cover price to pay for extra pages. As always, subscribers receive their copies at no extra cost.

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STARTER FOR TEN

Big questions of the moment

1 DOES WAYNE ROONEY'S FOOT INJURY SPELL DISASTER FOR ENGLAND'S EURO 2008 HOPES?
Steve McClaren's options are further reduced by the absence of the talismanic Manchester United forward.

2 WILL THERE BE A MORE INCREDIBLE STORY THIS YEAR THAN IRAQ'S ASIAN CUP TRIUMPH?
The victory over Saudi Arabia in the Final provoked wild celebrations back home in the war-ravaged country. More, page 20.

3 WAS THE WAIT FOR THE START OF DAVID BECKHAM'S MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER CAREER WORTH IT?
The fans were getting restless about his lack of action, and then he scored on his first start for Los Angeles Galaxy.

4 HAS FREDDY ADU MOVED TO EUROPE TOO SOON?
The American teenager joined Benfica after three troubled seasons in MLS. More, page 34.

5 WILL AN EASTERN EUROPEAN TEAM EVER WIN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE?
The group stage of Europe's premier club competition kicks off next month, and as usual the favourites will be from the big western leagues.

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6 WHO SAID THE INTERTOTO CUP WAS A WORTHLESS COMPETITION?

Sampdoria, Atletico Madrid and Blackburn were among the 11 teams that reached the UEFA Cup second qualifying round "through the back door".

7 WILL BRAZIL PULL IT OFF?

The federation formally presented its bid to stage the 2014 World Cup finals, but the country's infrastructure is in need of massive investment. More, page 24.

8 HOW MUCH HAS CARLOS TEVEZ COST MANCHESTER UNITED?

After months of wrangling, United were reported to have paid West Ham £2million and Tevez's agent, Kia Joorabchian, £10m.

9 HAVE REAL MADRID TAKEN A LEAF OUT OF BARCELONA'S BOOK BY GOING DUTCH?

The Spanish champions signed Wesley Sneijder from Ajax and Royston Drenthe from Feyenoord, both for big fees.

10 WHY DO ITALIANS ALWAYS FORGIVE AND FORGET?

The new Serie A season kicks off with *Calciopoli*-scarred Juventus and former bankrupts Napoli back in the fold.

The BIG issue

Give the UEFA Champions League Final a permanent home, says Gavin Hamilton

Magnifique!...the Stade de France holds close to 80,000 and is easily reached by rail

THE UEFA Champions League group stage will kick off in September with the usual suspects and the odd surprise qualifier. The competition ends in nine months, on May 21, in Moscow's Luzhniki stadium.

For personal reasons, I'm looking forward to the trip to Moscow. I haven't been there for 20 years and much has changed during that time.

It might all go swimmingly in the Russian capital, despite a scheduled local kick-off time, to appease western European TV audiences, of 10.45pm (forget about a game of two halves; this will be a game of two days).

But judging by recent experiences in Athens and Istanbul, further problems are to be expected as UEFA continues with its policy of rotating the Final around its member countries' biggest stadiums.

A few months ago in Athens, I was caught up in the ticketing chaos before the game between Milan and Liverpool. Yes, there were some Liverpool fans without tickets. But there was no excuse for violently herding legitimate ticket-holders around like sheep.

A major cause of the problems was the local policing and stewarding arrangements. It was Athens' first Final for 13 years, and there had been no dress rehearsal.

Similarly in Istanbul in 2005, the city's hotels could not cope with the influx of fans, while all roads leading to the Olympic stadium were choked with traffic hours before kick-off, forcing thousands to make the 10km journey from the city centre on foot.

Every year, we get the same problems, as local officials try to work with UEFA to ensure a smooth-running event. Nobody is particularly to blame; but the awarding of the hosting rights for the Champions League Final, and to a lesser extent the UEFA Cup Final, has become a political and commercial decision taken to appease the various different interests within UEFA.

Something needs to be done. A simple solution would be to play the Final in the same place every year. The Stade de France in Paris would be the obvious venue.

It is a magnificent football-specific stadium, with no running track, that holds close to 80,000 people. Trains take you there in 15 minutes from the central Gare du Nord.

Paris, as one of the world's most visited cities, has ample hotel accommodation, and it can be reached from most of Europe without the need to fly, making it a more environmentally-friendly venue.

Most importantly, Paris staged the first European Cup Final 51 years ago. What better way for UEFA to safeguard the competition's heritage than by taking the Final back to its roots?

Continue the debate online at worldsoccer.com/forums

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FROM THE MESSAGE BOARDS

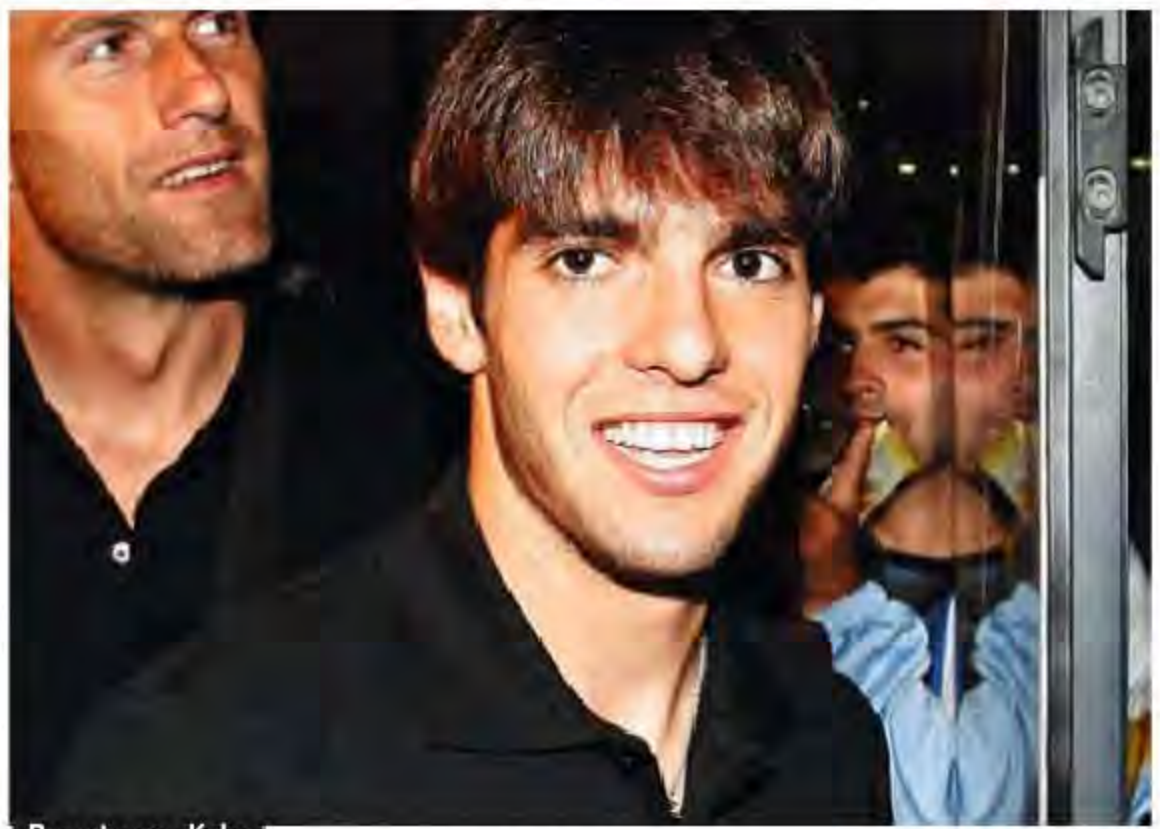
...on the Carlos Tevez affair

"Guys with money see an opportunity and get to the parts that clubs, for example, can't reach. We all know of international corporations richer than countries; well, these agents or businessmen are richer than clubs, and they are the ones who can take a promising kid from the youth teams of Argentina or Brazil and take personal care that they will be involved in highly lucrative transfers. Of course, they won't do it for love, but for money. But you know what? They might get rich with it, but the kind of risk they take has the result that most players are not badly off with them. And that's why they sign with them. [Tevez's agent Kia] Joorabchian says: 'Tevez is a sportsman, he doesn't really understand all the administrative bits and pieces.' He doesn't need to, and that's the reason Joorabchian gets his cut. I bet Tevez considers it money well spent."
Posted by "Rogorn", August 6

"The thing this has exposed most of all is the Premier League's complete incompetence in handling the affair. When Tevez and Mascherano first arrived at West Ham, the world and his dog knew there was something fishy going on – except, apparently, for the five or so men sitting on the Premier League and FA's boards who allowed the deal to go through. Even since then, it's not so much the way in which the players are owned that's 'wrong', but the simple fact that Premier League regulations aren't set up to even acknowledge the existence of such methods of ownership."
Posted by "Sam", August 7

"Mascherano's joining Liverpool seems to have been swept under the rug, which is strange as it is as crooked as the Tevez saga. Him joining West Ham was bad enough, but then to join Liverpool, going against FIFA's very own regulations that one player could not play for more than two club sides in any one yearly period...And all this despite no one actually knowing who holds the player's registration."
Posted by "stephen woodside", August 8

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH


Bus mix-up...Kaka

● **Kaka** made a Freudian slip, perhaps, when arriving at Moscow airport for a friendly tournament featuring his club, Milan, and Real Madrid, the club he has spent all summer denying he was about to move to. The Brazilian star wandered on to the Madrid team bus by mistake, before scuttling off to find the Milan bus.

● **Romario** is set to announce his retirement in a few weeks' time, at the age of 41. The former Brazil World Cup striker will play his last games for Vasco da Gama in the Brazilian national championship.

● "Keep calm, keep calm. Life's not like that," **Ronaldinho** was overheard saying when Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard demanded "more intensity" from him as the squad were put through their paces during pre-season training.

● **Carlos Marsa,** the controversial president of Spanish second division side Granada 74, went on hunger strike in protest at the local council's refusal to let his club share the Los Carmenes stadium with the other clubs in the Andalucian city. The authorities had taken umbrage at the fact that Granada 74, who last season won promotion to the regional fourth division, had sold their own ground and used the money to help them buy their place in the second division, by buying out the Ciudad de Murcia club. Marsa ended his protest after two days when the coastal town of Motril, 60km away, agreed to stage Granada 74's home games.

Retiring...Romario

Brian Glanville

...on Jack Warner's grotesque attack on England...Steve McClaren's wasteful trip to Washington...the resilience of Rolando Bianchi...and West Ham – in financial straits?

Contretemps survivor...Warner

SHAMELESS AND insatiable as ever, Jack Warner, the Teflon Trinidadian, has poked his malign face above the parapet and grotesquely attacked English football. He has insisted that England must not be awarded the 2018 World Cup, but quite why this ill-natured man, the survivor of so many contretemps, should choose this moment to make so gratuitous an assault on England and the FA defies logical analysis. The more so as you would have thought that after the 2006 World Cup ticket scandal, Warner – though he got off the hook – would keep a low profile for a while.

Let me remind you of what happened. It emerged that £500,000-worth of tickets had been illegally sold by a Trinidadian company called Simpaul. But with a cry of "not me, guv!" Warner was free, leaving one of his sons, Darryl, in the firing line. FIFA, who had conducted an inexplicably secret inquiry, imposed a matching £500,000 fine, due – presuming it has all now been paid – to go to charity.

The deplorable truth is that both under the FIFA presidency of Joao Havelange and now Sepp Blatter, Warner, who controls the 35 CONCACAF votes in FIFA, has been utterly indulged. His nemesis, Andrew Jennings, whom he apparently insults whenever he sees him, provided pages of chapter and verse in his alarming expose, *Foul!*, which led to him being banned by FIFA.

As a dismal example, Warner managed to get the World Under-17 Championship allotted to Trinidad, despite bids from far more suitable countries, such as Finland, Japan, Peru and Scotland. When the Australian squad arrived, their coach, Les Avory, protested furiously at the wretched conditions in their hotel: dirty tiling, lavatories that wouldn't flush, missing showerheads. Warner refused to move the team. And what of the so-called Dr Joao Havelange Centre of Excellence, a complex built in Trinidad when it would have made so much more sense to have put it more centrally in the CONCACAF region, in Cuba or Jamaica? Once again, Warner got his way, even being allowed to spend the whole £5million CONCACAF budget, then having the brass neck to borrow another £3m from FIFA, which he was allowed not to repay.

WHAT possessed hapless England manager Steve McClaren to waste the FA's money flying all the way to Washington to watch David Beckham play for just 18 minutes for LA Galaxy? The midfielder had warned him that he was unlikely to have more than a brief role, to which McClaren responded that he would have the chance to talk to his club coach, Frank Yallop. About what? Anything that couldn't have been discussed on the telephone? All this giving an importance to Beckham oddly out of kilter with McClaren's initial and explicable decision to drop him.

And what about Liverpool's stalwart centre-back, Jamie Carragher, absurdly deployed by McClaren as a left-back on his wrong foot against Israel, then left out of the side in Estonia. Carragher, incensed, vowed never to play for England again, but a plethora of injuries to McClaren's centre-backs then condemned the manager to grovel to Carragher, begging him to change his mind.

SETTING aside, if one can, the miasma hanging over Manchester City and the Thaksin Shinawatra takeover, I was interested to be at Upton Park to see Rolando Bianchi neatly score City's opening goal against West Ham on the first day of the season and thereafter give a performance that won the praise

of Hammers manager Alan Curbishley. For Bianchi's career is surely the stuff of science fiction.

Born near Bergamo, he was duly signed by Atalanta, the major local club, but didn't score a single goal for them in 21 games. With Cagliari, whom he helped to promotion from Serie B to A, he scored four times in 39 games. And his first season with Reggina produced only one goal in nine matches. Last season, however, a man inspired, he could scarcely stop scoring, his achievement the more remarkable for being accomplished with a club of such modest renown.

So to his £8.8million transfer to Manchester City. If there's a moral here, it must be never abandon hope.

COULD the recent global financial crisis undermine West Ham's Icelandic owners? This summer they have spent money in abundance, and the word is that they may have overreached themselves in their borrowings; in which case, what will happen at Upton Park?

Meanwhile, Richard Scudamore, chief executive of the Greed Is Good League, has cut a sadly indecisive, even evasive, figure in the joint scandals of West Ham and Carlos Tevez (himself wholly innocent). A late settlement got the Premiership and the Hammers off the hook, though it was astonishing to read that the West Ham chairman, Eggert Magnusson, had actually been ready to let Kia Joorabchian and his still-mysterious backers have Tevez for a mere £100,000. In the event, of course, they pocketed £2million.

From a personal and subjective point of view, I am not sorry to see West Ham still in the Premiership, but it grows clearer than ever that a three-point deduction, which almost certainly would have condemned them to relegation, would have been the proper punishment.

But when will we ever hear exactly who and what lies behind Joorabchian? It's not me, says Boris Berezovsky, whom the Brazilians reportedly want to extradite, as do the Russians, though it won't ever happen.

Meanwhile, government and opposition have been happy to play pass the parcel. Gerry Sutcliffe, the new minister of sport, proclaims, so far as you can understand him, that he doesn't care to comment on individual cases. Then what is he there for? His Conservative shadow brightly suggests that the matter be dealt with by...the Foreign Office! ●

Read Glanville every week at worldsoccer.com/glanville
worldsoccer.com

QUOTES & NOTES

Who said what and why

Christmas cracker...Mancini

"I'd love to go back to Baghdad and celebrate but who's going to protect me there?"

Iraq skipper Younis Mahmoud puts personal safety before a party following his team's triumph at the Asian Cup.

"We're not putting a policeman on all our players. We're only tightening the controls."

Barcelona technical director Txiki Beguiristain clarifies the nature of a new code of conduct, which includes a ban on late-night sorties.

"Now we're all looking forward to a wonderful Christmas."

Internazionale coach Roberto Mancini after seeing his side are pitted against city rivals Milan on December 23 in the Serie A fixture list.

"They had to do their own cooking, and the surprising thing was that it was edible."

Jurgen Klopp, coach of German second division side Mainz, after taking his squad to a youth hostel this summer.

"I've been a pro for seven years, and for five of them I've been treated like a dog back home in Cameroon."

Toulouse midfielder Achille Emana complains of disrespect from the media in his native land.

"I'm concerned by such insults but I'll get over them."

Jose Antonio Reyes comments on accusations that he is a mercenary and imposter from fans of his new club, Atletico Madrid, whom he joined from Real Madrid.

"And we thought marriage would stabilise him."

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas after Brazilian striker Fred turned up late for pre-season training.

"I've learned from the example of friends who have left Milan and then regretted it."

To whom could Kaka be referring?

Staying put...Kaka

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

PRIZE MONEY

Who earned what

£493,000

UNITED STATES
The amount shared by the eight teams taking part in the inaugural SuperLiga tournament this summer – FC Dallas, DC United, Houston Dynamo and Los Angeles Galaxy of the host country, America, Guadalajara, Morelia and Pachuca of Mexico.

£23.41M

ENGLAND
The amount received by Chelsea for their 2006-07 Champions League campaign. Runners-up Liverpool, who beat Chelsea in the semi-finals, received "only" £21.78m because they had a lower share of the "market pool" payment than their rivals since they finished lower in the domestic league in 2005-06. Manchester United received £21.29m, Arsenal £13.01m. UEFA Cup quarter-finalists Tottenham received £2.92m.

£19.4M

GERMANY
The amount received by Bayern Munich for their Champions League campaign last term. Werder Bremen got £12.47m, Hamburg £9.67m.

£15.3M

FRANCE
The amount received by champions Lyon for their participation in the 2006-07 Champions League. Lille received £12.19m, Bordeaux took £10.89m.

£1.19M

ARGENTINA
The amount Boca Juniors received for winning the Libertadores Cup in June.

£4.87M

BULGARIA

The amount received by Levski Sofia, who lost all six games in their Champions League group last season. It was the smallest sum received by any of the 32 clubs that competed in the group stage.

£21.22M

HOLLAND

The amount received by PSV Eindhoven, the sole Dutch representatives in the Champions League group stage last season.

£4.21M

SPAIN

The amount received by Sevilla for their successful UEFA Cup campaign. Espanyol, the team they beat on penalties in the Final, received £3.58m. Barcelona received £15.33m, Valencia £15.26m and Real Madrid £13.52m for their respective Champions League campaigns.

£1.72M

EGYPT

The amount shared by the eight teams that reached the group stage of last year's African Champions League. Egyptian winners Al Ahly took the lion's share, £468,773, runners-up CS Sfaxien of Tunisia received £382,141, and semi-finalists ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast and South Africa's Orlando Pirates each got £210,732.

£296,000

SOUTH KOREA

The amount received by Chonbuk Motors for winning the 2006 Asian Champions League.

£26.71M

ITALY

The amount Milan collected from their 2006-07 Champions League campaign, including £4.72m for winning the Final in Athens. Roma, who reached the quarter-finals, received £20.99m, while Internazionale, who lost to Valencia in the first knockout round, received £19.98m.

£7.4M

JAPAN

The total prize money paid to the six sides that took part in the 2006 Club World Cup. Winners Internacional took home £2.22m, runners-up Barcelona received £1.72m, and third-placed Al Ahly £1.23m. All participants were guaranteed a minimum payment of £493,000.

HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Fabio Capello
What next for the former Real Madrid coach?

ITALY

FABIO CAPELLO, who led Real Madrid to a league title success two months ago only to be shown the door, says he has finished with club soccer. "It's a closed book. I have no desire to coach a club team," he told *Gazzetta Dello Sport* in mid-August, though he did leave a chink of a possibility of a return when adding: "It would take a really tremendous opportunity to make me change my mind, but, in any case, not with the season already started."

Does this mean that the man who has won league titles with Real, Milan, Juventus and Roma is now angling for a national team job? English, Spanish, Italian and other fans are advised to put themselves on alert for a development that will surely come about later if not sooner.

In the meantime, Capello will this season be working as a pundit for Italian state broadcaster RAI, commentating on Italy's Euro 2008 ties and Champions League matches. This is a role he filled, brilliantly, in the early 1980s and again in the late 1990s.

As for the new Serie A campaign, Capello said champions Inter are the obvious favourites, but added that they cannot expect to have things as easy as last season. "They have strengthened themselves with two terrific buys in Suazo and Chivu," he said. "On top of that they have refound a really important player in Vieira, and they have held on to Figo, another key element. They're a complete team that believes in itself, but it's an exaggeration to say that it will be a one-horse race again. Last season, given the absences [of Juventus] and the points penalties [against Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio], it was as if they had a 15-metre start in a 100-metre sprint. They could still win again this year but not by the same distance."

Paddy Agnew

Relaxation mode...Capello takes time out in Shanghai

Giovani Dos Santos & Bojan Krkic
Teenage stars give Barcelona a Sensational Six

SPAIN

Clever movement...Krkic

FOR ALL THE talk of the Magnificent Four, of Leo Messi, Samuel Eto'o, Ronaldinho and new signing Thierry Henry, the real stars of Barcelona's pre-season were two kids, raising the idea of a Sensational Six.

Giovani Dos Santos and Bojan Krkic, both raised at Barca's La Masia academy, have suggested they are destined for great things. Maybe that should not come as a huge surprise. Dos Santos, who joined Barca at 11, has long been touted as the new Ronaldinho and won the 2005 Under-17 World Cup with his native Mexico. Krkic's father, a Serbian, is a former footballer (his mother is Catalan) and the youngster has played for Spain at Under-19 and Under-20 level, as well as scoring dozens of goals for Barca B.

Yet both are still very young – Dos Santos 17, Krkic 16 – and doubts lingered about their ability to make the step up. Not any more. Given the opportunity to play with the first team for a good length of time, the duo took full advantage. No wonder Barca did not hold back when looking to sell Santi Ezquerro, Eidur Gudjohnsen, Javier Saviola and Ludovic Giuly this summer.

Just ask fans in Scotland, where Barca went on a pre-season tour. It wasn't Henry that had them purring, it was Krkic, who proved himself to be an accomplished goalscorer with a wonderful sense of space and clever movement. Little wonder that Barcelona and the federation battled about whether he would join the Spanish squad for the current Under-17 World Cup in South Korea. Spain won the club v country battle, and Krkic proved his worth with two goals in the opening game.

Dos Santos, meanwhile, has the athleticism, pace, power and dribbling skills of...well, Ronaldinho. Just ask the Japanese who came to see the Brazilian on another leg of Barca's pre-season travels and left raving about the Mexican.

With Messi only 20 and already showing signs that he could become the world's best player, plus two kids who have followed in his footsteps – foreigners who were adopted young, living and learning at the mini farmhouse that stands alongside Camp Nou – Barcelona's future looks bright.

Sid Lowe

Mexican rave...Dos Santos wowed the fans in Japan during Barca's pre-season visit

Butt out...Zidane makes his red-card assault

Marco Materazzi
Defender reveals what he said to Zidane

ITALY

ITALY'S World Cup-winning defender Marco Materazzi has admitted he provoked Zinedine Zidane's violent reaction during last year's World Cup Final by telling the Frenchman that he preferred his "whore of a sister" to his shirt.

The Italian explained: "I [had] held his shirt for only a few seconds; he turned to me and spoke to me in a manic fashion, looked at me arrogantly from top to bottom and said: 'If you want my shirt you can have it after the match.' I responded with an insult, that is true."

Zidane's infamous reaction, butting Materazzi in the chest, earned him a red card and France went on to lose to Italy on penalties.

The defender's admission was reported by Italian magazine *TV Sorrisi e Canzoni*. Materazzi later insisted that the quote about Zidane's sister had been taken from his forthcoming autobiography and not from the interview with the magazine.

Dick Advocaat
Dutchman tipped to leave Russia for Socceroos job

AUSTRALIA

FORMER Holland and South Korea coach Dick Advocaat, currently at the helm of Zenit St Petersburg, is expected to take charge of Australia's national side later this year. The 59-year-old has agreed to take the job, according to the Australian media, but has delayed a formal announcement until the end of the Russian league season, in early November.

Advocaat would be following in the footsteps of another Dutchman, Guus Hiddink, who guided the Socceroos at the 2006 World Cup.

Graham Arnold, the current interim coach, is expected to revert to his position as Olympic coach.

A number of other big names have been linked to the Australia post, including Gerard Houllier and Jorvan Vieira, Iraq's Asian Cup-winning coach.

Change of scene?...Advocaat

Alexandre Pato
Brazilian teenager signs for Milan

ITALY

Waddling in..."The Duck" arrives at Milan's Malpensa airport

EUROPEAN champions Milan made Brazilian wonderkid Alexandre "The Duck" Pato their first major signing of the summer, from Internacional.

The teenager, who was watched by a number of scouts at July's Under-20 World Cup, has already moved to Italy, but will not appear in a competitive match until he turns 18 on January 3 next year. In the meantime, he will train with the first-team squad.

The Italian media said Milan had paid £15million for Pato, who has agreed a five-year deal.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti was keen to play down comparisons with Milan's Brazilian playmaker Kaka. "It is a different situation because when Kaka arrived he was already an accomplished player," Ancelotti said. "Pato is a young, strong boy but he needs to be given the necessary time to grow and mature."

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Gabriel Heinze celebrates a quiet moment with the v-Konstrukt by PUMA.

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Wesley Sneijder & Royston Drenthe

Real Madrid go Dutch with latest signings

SPANISH CHAMPIONS Real Madrid have taken a leaf out of the book of eternal rivals Barcelona by signing two Dutchmen, Wesley Sneijder, from Ajax for £18million, and Royston Drenthe, from Feyenoord for £8.5m.

The buys took Real's transfer spending so far this year to £70m. Earlier this summer, they paid Porto £20m for Portuguese defender Pepe, and in January, Argentinian starlets Fernando Gago and Gonzalo Higuain were signed for a combined £23m.

Madrid had also not given up hope of signing another Dutchman, Arjen Robben, as we went to press, though Chelsea had increased their valuation to £27m.

Thumb print...Drenthe and Sneijder are looking to leave their mark on the Bernabeu

OBITUARIES

Two pioneers of the European club game

Original heroes of the European club revolution are becoming harder to find after the deaths of two more pioneering players.

JOSE IGLESIAS, known as **JOSEITO**, was Real Madrid's outside-right when they won the first European Cup, against Reims in 1956. He won it again, this time playing at inside-right, in 1958 against Milan. Joseito played for Madrid between 1951 and 1959, scoring 51 goals, but did not play in their other European Cup Final victories during that period. The Madrid platform earned him the opportunity to play once for Spain. He also played for hometown club Zamora, Valladolid, Salamanca, Santander, Levante and Rayo Vallecano. Joseito died aged 80 in Granada, where he once coached the local team.

Barcelona have also been in mourning for a favourite of the 1950s. **ESTEBAN ARETA** played for the club between 1954 and 1956, and also won a single cap for Spain. He scored Barcelona's first goal in European competition – against a Copenhagen Select in the inaugural Industrial Inter-Cities Fairs Cup in 1955. Areta died aged 75.

A third old Spanish hero, keeper Raimundo Perez Lezama, has died aged 85. His career came too early for European club competition. Lezama had 16 seasons at Athletic Bilbao, with whom he won the League in 1943 and 1956 and six Spanish cups. He also won one cap and the Zamora trophy for the top keeper in the 1946-47 championship.

Keir Radnedge

Well-respected...Prokopenko

VIKTOR PROKOPENKO, one of Ukraine's most respected coaches, has died aged 62. Prokopenko was in charge of Shakhtar Donetsk when they made their first appearance in the Champions League.

BOB VAUGHAN, a long-time contributor to *World Soccer*, has died aged 67. Bob, a former goalkeeper for non-league Kingstonian, had been living in Berlin. A memorial service is planned for the UK.

JEROEN BOERE, the former West Ham striker, has died at the age of 39. The Dutchman's other clubs included Go Ahead Eagles, Crystal Palace and Southend.

English connection...Boere at Southend

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Marcelo Salas...
the former Lazio striker was recalled to the Chile squad at the age of 32.

Recalled...Salas

Four for starters...Huntelaar

Jerome Anderson...
the London-based agent was involved in nearly all the Thaksin Shinawatra-funded arrivals at Manchester City.

Klaas-Jan Huntelaar...
the Ajax striker hit four goals as his side thrashed De Graafschap 8-1 on the opening day of the Dutch league season.

BAD MONTH FOR...

This way out...Zhu

Cris...
Lyon's Brazilian international centre-back will be out of action until February after tearing knee ligaments.

Zhu Guanghu...
sacked as China's national coach after the team's poor performance at the Asian Cup.

Lazio...
UEFA said it would investigate reports of racist chanting at their home Champions League qualifying tie against Dinamo Bucharest.

Gabriel Heinze...
the Argentinian defender failed in his attempt to force Manchester United to allow him to join Liverpool.

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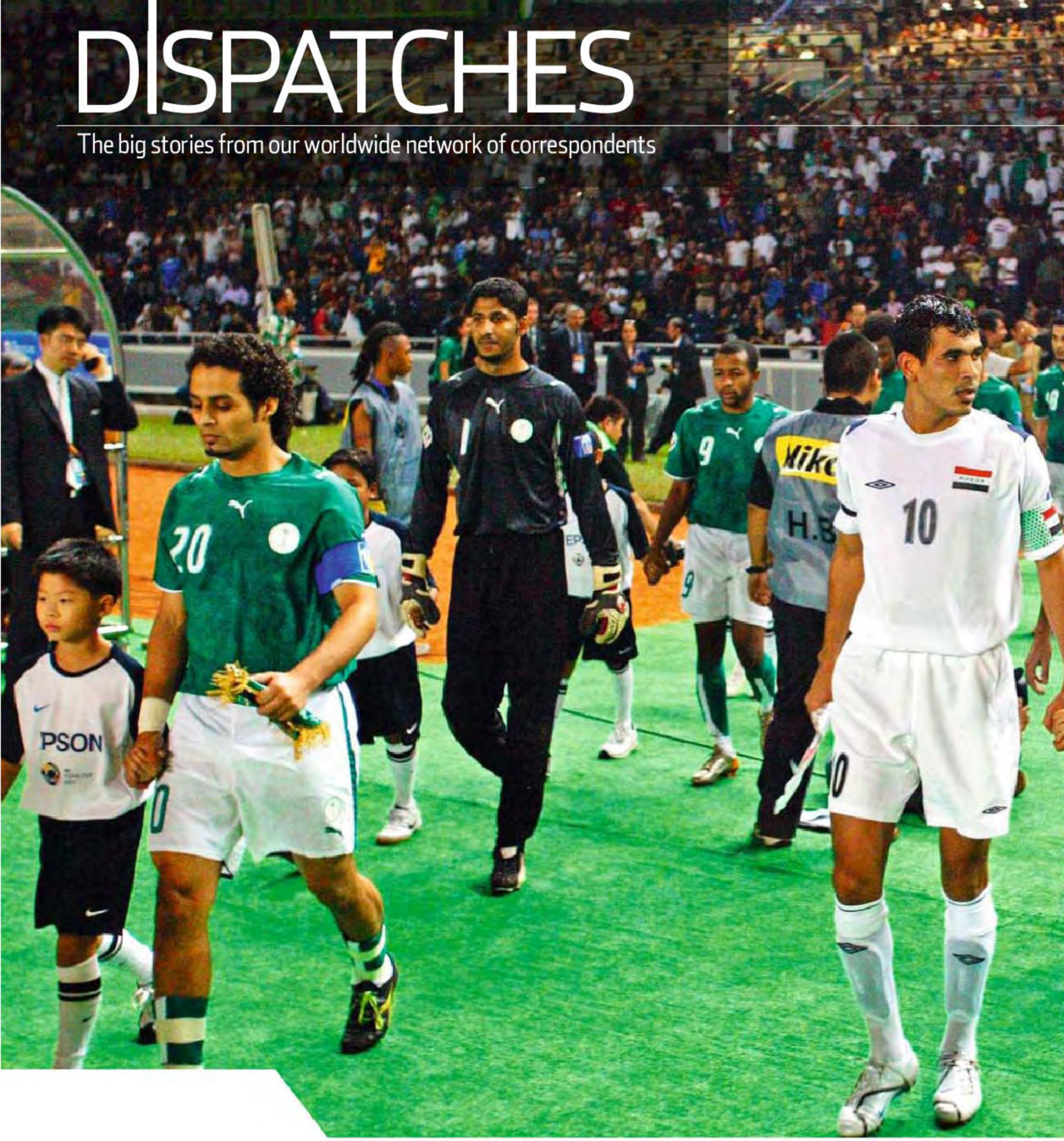

Against all odds

Showing the way...Younis Mahmoud (right), the tournament's most valuable player, leads Iraq out for the Final against Saudi Arabia

Iraq's Asian Cup triumph was amazing given the obstacles that stood in their way

MICHAEL CHURCH in Jakarta

AS IRAQ CAPTAIN Younis Mahmoud led his team out in Jakarta for the Asian Cup Final and their shock 1-0 defeat of Saudi Arabia, the black armbands worn by him and his team-mates were a poignant reminder of the terrible violence and suffering in their homeland.

Four days earlier, more than 50 football fans had been killed in a double car bombing in the Baghdad suburb of Mansour as they celebrated Iraq's semi-final victory against South Korea.

The shadow of violence hung over the Iraqis throughout the tournament. Team physiotherapist Anwar Jassim was the victim of a car bombing as he prepared to join the team at their training camp in Jordan in June; the brother-in-law of goalkeeper Noor Sabri was killed in the days leading up to the tournament; and the step-mother of midfielder Hawar Mulla Mohammed was killed just before Iraq's quarter-final clash with Vietnam in Bangkok.

As the security situation has steadily worsened in Iraq, football – just as every other facet of life – has been seriously affected.

The nation endured more than a decade of United Nations sanctions following the first Gulf War and the sporting infrastructure was already beyond breaking point before the United States-led invasion of 2003. The subsequent insurgency forced the national team and club sides to play all their international matches overseas, in countries such as Qatar, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates.

Not surprisingly, that has had an adverse affect on the Iraqi players, who struggled to qualify for the Asian Cup, losing against Singapore, while the federation has had to bear the additional costs of the national team's nomadic existence.

"No one helps us [financially]," said federation president Hussain Saeed. "[We have continued] only because of our relationships with other federations. Qatar will host our Olympic qualifying games, and sometimes others will do it. We prepared for the Asian Cup in Amman in Jordan, then went to South Korea for two matches, and this comes from a good relationship with our federation.

"We need some help from the Iraqi government or from FIFA or from the AFC [Asian Football Confederation]. They must take care of us. Also, the political parties in Iraq must support this team because they represent all the people of Iraq. All the people love this team."

> "Iraq's sporting infrastructure was already beyond breaking point before the US-led invasion"

Common cause

While the nation continues to disintegrate and heads towards a seemingly inevitable civil war, the national team have become a rare rallying point and common cause for the whole country.

All enquiries about the team's ethnic make-up were met with a straight bat by federation officials, who sought instead to focus attention on the lessons the team could teach the various factions at home.

"We don't know who is Sunni and who is Shia in our team or among the fans, and we don't care," Saeed said. "The fans love Iraq and I think Iraqis are united under two things; one is the flag and the other is the national football team. This is very important.

"Football is the hope for the people in Iraq, and when you care about football, we can decrease the violence in Iraq. When the football team is playing there is no bombing in Iraq because all the people are going to

Flag day...Iraqi fans celebrate in Baghdad

watch the game, and that is a message for the politicians. It is important to help the players, to help the team."

Amid all the talk of war and politics, it would be easy to forget the blossoming generation of Iraqi players who have taken the national team to unprecedented heights in the regional game over the past decade.

In 2000 they won the Asian Youth Championship in Tehran, defeating Japan in the Final, and many of that squad graduated to the Olympic team, who, four years later, reached the semi-finals in Athens then lost to Italy in the bronze-medal match. Iraq reached the Final of the Asian Games last December but lost to hosts Qatar.

However, going into the Asian Cup finals there had been few signs that Iraq could go on to become continental champions. Brazilian coach Jorvan Vieira – an experienced journeyman who has worked extensively throughout the Middle East – was appointed in late May and had spent mere weeks with the team as they started their preparations in Jordan.

The warm-up began in earnest with the West Asian Football Championship, in which Iraq reached the Final but lost to an under-strength Iran. Vieira's men then suffered a 3-0 loss to South Korea and a 2-0 reversal against Uzbekistan in Korea before flying to Bangkok for their opening group game against co-hosts Thailand.

With 16 of the 23-man squad playing their club football outside Iraq – in nations such as Cyprus, Lebanon, Qatar and Iran – the team was always going to take time to gel and things looked ominous when, with just six minutes gone, the Thais took the lead from a Sutee Suksomkit penalty.

But Vieira's team, with Saudi Arabia-based midfielder Nashat Akram pulling the strings, were soon showing they were a force to be reckoned with, and Younis equalised just after the half-hour during an impressive performance.

A 3-1 victory over pre-tournament favourites Australia in the next game all but earned Iraq a spot in the quarter-finals and they sealed it with a 0-0 draw against Qatar. They then received some good fortune, being pitted against the weakest last-eight side, Vietnam, whom they comfortably brushed aside, 2-0, Younis scoring both goals.The semi-final defeat of Korea, 4-3 on penalties after a 0-0 draw, took the Iraqis into uncharted territory – the country's first Asian Cup Final.

Saudi Arabia were seeking a record fourth continental title, and few pundits gave the Iraqis much hope against a side that had impressed in knocking out defending champions Japan in the semi-finals. But Iraq were always on top, spurred on by the emotion of the occasion and the majority of the 50,000 crowd in the Gelora Bung Karno stadium in the Indonesian capital.

Threat nullified

Central defenders Ali Hussein Rehema and Jassim Gholam nullified the threat of Saudi strikers Yasser Al-Qahtani and Malek Mouath, who had tormented defences throughout the tournament, while Nashat, Mahdi Karim and Hawar kept their opponents on the back foot. So there was no sense of injustice when Iraq scored in the 71st minute, Younis heading home Hawar's corner after goalkeeper Yasser Al-Mosailem misjudged the flight of the ball.

It was the fourth goal of the tournament for the captain – the leading scorer in the Qatari League last season – to put him joint top of the scorers' chart with Al-Qahtani and Japan's Naohiro Takahara.

Younis also earned the tournament's most valuable player award and he, along with Nashat, will be among the favourites to win the Asian player of the year accolade. The striker could also be in line for a move to Europe.

But Younis' attention was on delivering a victory that he hoped would go some way towards easing the suffering of the Iraqi people, and in particular the families of those who had died a few days earlier. After the game, he said: "A mother of one of the victims [of the Mansour bombs] said she had not wept over her child's dead body but had declared: 'I present my son as a sacrifice to the Iraqi national team.' So we had to win." ●

Asian Cup finals round-up, page 122

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"The mother of one of the car-bomb victims said: 'I present my son as a sacrifice to the Iraqi national team.' So we had to win"

Iraq captain Younis Mahmoud

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White elephant?...Rio's Joao Havelange stadium was built for the Pan-American Games

Dodgy dossier

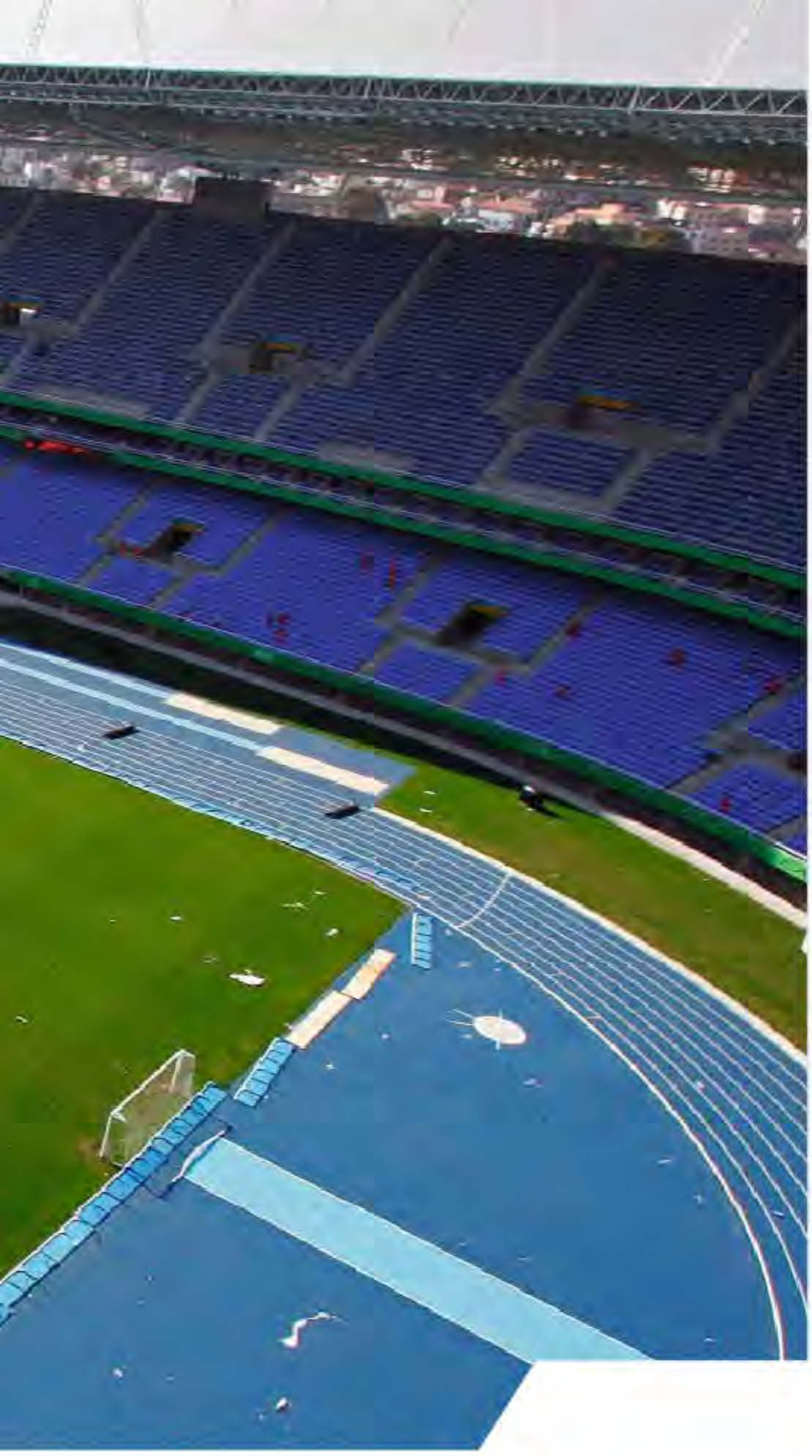
Brazil has formally presented its bid to host the 2014 World Cup. But the issues of budget size and the country's woeful infrastructure have not been addressed

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

BRAZIL ONCE AGAIN played the "we deserve it" card as they formally presented their bid to host the 2014 World Cup to FIFA in Zurich. Before the presentation, it had been hoped, perhaps optimistically, that the Brazilian federation (CBF) would do something other than boast about the past and offer vague promises.

Yet, once again, it ducked the real issues as president Ricardo Teixeira refused to answer media questions about the size of the bid budget or any potential challenges the country would face. Instead, the CBF preferred to wheel out Romario, who made an inane speech during which he told delegates: "The nation of football is also a country of beautiful cities, a hospitable people and cultural diversity which will delight people who come from all over the world. For everything that the country represents, we deserve a chance."

This has been the discourse ever since 2003 when the other nine South American federations all agreed to back Brazil as the lone candidate for the continent, which is due to stage the event under FIFA's rotation system. Colombia briefly broke ranks last year but quickly withdrew its candidacy. Yet nothing concrete has been done to prove that Brazil's bid is viable. The four years since 2003 have effectively been dedicated to the political side of things, suggesting that the bid is in reality based on Teixeira's close relationship with FIFA president Sepp Blatter. Sadly, the way



things are at the moment, Blatter and other World Cup visitors may be too busy sitting in traffic jams or queues at airports to enjoy the delights that Romario mentioned.

Serious problems

Brazil has serious infrastructure problems and only seven years to solve them. At present, none of the country's stadiums (the CBF has put forward 14 existing stadiums and four new ones in its preliminary list) comes anywhere near meeting FIFA's requirements for World Cup finals matches. During the last World Cup qualifying competition, Brazil's stadiums were generally in worse condition than those in neighbouring countries such as Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina. Even if the country were to use the minimum of eight stadiums, it would require a huge investment.

As Romario was giving his speech in Switzerland, thousands of Brazilians were experiencing the frustrations of their country's chaotic air transport system. It went into meltdown after a plane crashed at Sao Paulo's Congonhas airport, the hub of the domestic network, on July 17, killing all 187 on board and at least 12 on the ground.

Hundreds of flights were delayed and cancelled as politicians – not airline safety experts – argued about what to do. It was Brazil's second major air crash in only 10 months, raising huge concerns about air travel in the country, which, given the appalling state of the highways and the absence of passenger railways, would be the only viable way to ferry teams, officials and fans around the vast nation during the World Cup. There is no sign of an end to the chaos as the politicians continue to interfere and underpaid air traffic controllers struggle with obsolete equipment. "Judges and politicians seem to be driving the safety system in Brazil. Politics and safety do not mix," said Bill Voss, president of the Flight Safety Foundation. "Civil aviation regulators must be allowed to act independently and without interference. The politicians need to step back and let the safety professionals do their job before more lives are lost."

Meanwhile, Rio de Janeiro was hosting the Pan-American Games, which could be considered an indication of the country's ability to handle an international sports event, albeit on a much smaller scale.

The general verdict: stadiums and facilities were generally first class, the security system – which included police cars patrolling almost every street corner – worked, and there were no major fiascos, at least in the eyes of foreign visitors. You could even drive down the city's expressways at night without being car-jacked or shot at, a rare privilege.

However, logistics were a bit of a nightmare, with venues spread across the huge city. Many people longed for the more modest but compact facilities at the previous Games, four years ago, in the Dominican Republic's Santo Domingo, a city whose efforts, incidentally, were unjustly trashed both by Brazilian officials and media.

More worrying was the fact that the Games revealed the inability of Brazilian politicians to keep their promises, something upon which the World Cup bid dossier handed to FIFA will largely have been based. Rio's hosting of the Pan-Am Games came at a huge cost – the original budget of £110million was overrun by some 900 per cent, to just short of £1billion, according to the Brazilian media. As work on the venues fell further and further behind schedule, the authorities simply threw public money at the problem to avoid Brazil losing face.

"It's quite clear that public opinion was fooled by the Brazilian Olympic Committee, by the Rio city government and the federal government with a deceiptful budget," wrote Marcos Augusto Goncalves in the *Folha de Sao Paulo* newspaper. "We are incapable of mobilising ourselves to solve the disgraceful problem of the *favelas*, but we can quickly find billions to burn in a third-rate event that will shortly be forgotten."

Also, the much-vaunted "legacy" of the Games never materialised. Rio mayor Cesar Maia had promised three new metro lines but only 600 metres of new track was laid. Instead, the "transport system" consisted of special lanes for official buses on the city's main roads. The security improvements did not last, either. As soon as the Games ended, the police cars were removed from the street corners and the crime rate started rising again.

Meanwhile, non-private schools and hospitals remain as grim as ever, the money that could have been spent on them having instead been splashed out on the Pan-Am Games stadiums, which now risk becoming white elephants.

Respected columnist Juca Kfouri wrote in his blog for the *Folha de Sao Paulo*: "Yes, Brazil can stage a World Cup, as long as it presents a budget immediately, something which it hasn't yet done, maybe to avoid what happened with the Pan-Am Games, when the cost was nine times the budget. The problem is that there is no reason to believe that the people who head the project deserve our confidence." ●

"There are huge concerns about air travel, yet it would be the only viable way to ferry teams, officials and fans around the vast nation during the World Cup"

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Past master...veteran defender Alessandro Nesta has retired from international football

The bashers are back

France coach Raymond Domenech stirred things up ahead of the crunch Euro 2008 qualifier

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

AS THE CURTAIN rose on the Serie A season and the national team prepared to face France in a crunch Euro 2008 qualifier in September, a re-run of the World Cup Final, Italian football found itself in the midst of yet another controversy. It would seem that despite the triumphs of the *Azzurri* in Berlin and Milan in last season's Champions League, the Italy-bashers are back.

It was France coach Raymond Domenech who stirred the nest, saying in a newspaper interview that the Italian game suffered from endemic corruption. In particular, he claimed that in November 1999, the Italians had "bought" the referee of an Under-21 game against France, of whom he was then in charge, in Taranto. Domenech added that rarely in his career had he been so "cheated".

The French federation publicly distanced itself from Domenech's remarks, but the matter will not end there, with UEFA curious to hear more about this alleged match-fixing. The coach says he is happy to explain all in detail, while his opposite number on that night, Marco Tardelli, described the accusations as nonsense, adding: "Every now and again he says stupid things. That's the way he is, he shoots his mouth off. He tries to provoke people, he does it often.

"The first thing we should remember about this whole business is that there were two games [home and away] and therefore we would have had to buy the referee away from home, too. Maybe the problem is that Domenech should have won much more with that very strong Under-21 team, yet in the end he won nothing."

As for the forthcoming game against France, the Italians will be without central defender Alessandro Nesta and playmaker Francesco Totti, who both announced their retirement from the international game this summer.

Extra pressure

Both said their decision had stemmed from the fact that their bodies simply could no longer take the extra pressure brought by playing for the national team. Rather than express anger or dismay, Italy coach Roberto Donadoni said that he "respected" the decisions, adding that they "should have opened up a debate. Maybe the moment has come to reshape the league calendar. Twenty teams are too many [for Serie A], and the best players get to the end of the season exhausted both mentally and physically. Then people are amazed when the World Cup finals produce a poor spectacle."But if Donadoni had any illusions that things might be about to change, he was mistaken. The coach failed in his attempt to persuade the Italian League to start the season a week earlier in order to have his players that bit fitter for the game against France and, at the same time, allow them a longer Christmas break.

One possible piece of good news for Donadoni could be the return to Italian football of *enfant terrible* Antonio Cassano. He will spend a year on loan at Sampdoria from Real Madrid, who agreed to pay 75 per cent of his £2million salary, with his new club picking up the rest.

Given the many vicissitudes of the 25-year-old's career so far, this move could well prove to be a last chance. He was practically unused at Real since joining in January 2006 from Roma, where he had "distinguished" himself by his frequent rows with coach Fabio Capello, senior team-mates and occasionally referees.

"Cassano had better put everything that is not football out of his head," Donadoni warned. "He should concentrate on his profession. He had better learn that time passes and doesn't come back. If he concentrates on his football he could play in any team in any country. But he needs to change and do so quickly."

Cassano has been widely viewed as one of the great talents of Italian football and was considered by many to have been the one positive note of Italy's disappointing Euro 2004 campaign, when they exited in the first round. But he has not shown good form for three seasons now, and in that respect Sampdoria and coach Walter Mazzarri are taking a major gamble. Yet it could yield rich dividends if Cassano settles down and starts to play again.

Lazio's Champions League qualifying draw at home to Dinamo Bucharest was bad in terms of performance and also because yet again a game at the Olimpico stadium was marred by scuffles outside and racist chanting inside. Five visiting fans were stabbed in the hours before the game, and the racism could cost Lazio dear, even though, as the club were quick to point out, the vast majority of the home fans rapidly drowned out the chants of a tiny minority.

Lazio will have to hope that UEFA believes them when they claim that the whole affair was blown out of all proportion by what they call the "desire to place the team and the fans in a bad light". Are we talking Italy-bashers again? Over to UEFA for the answer. ●

> **"Every now and again Domenech says stupid things. He shoots his mouth off and tries to provoke people"**
>
> *Marco Tardelli, Italy's former Under-21 coach*

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Kan-do man...Frederic Kanoute (left) and Duda celebrate after the striker's penalty helped Sevilla to victory over Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup

High five

Sevilla won yet another trophy, the Spanish Super Cup, and by thrashing champions Real Madrid in their own back yard

SID LOWE
in Madrid

THERE IS JUST no stopping Sevilla. Never mind the fact that their best player, Daniel Alves, was seemingly a few days – and a few million euros – from departing. What does it matter if top scorer Frederic Kanoute spent much of the summer looking for a way out? Who cares if the coach, Juande Ramos, the most successful in the club's 100-year history, was having "secret" talks with Tottenham (we know about them thanks to an anonymous tip-off and a sharp-shooting photographer)? Because, when it comes down to the business on the pitch, Sevilla will not be derailed.

Ramos met Spurs secretary John Alexander and vice-chairman Paul Kemsley in Seville's opulent Alfonso XIII hotel on a sticky Friday night in August, but that did not prevent him from planning another successful assault on the Bernabeu stadium two days later. When the coach does depart – and his relationship with president Jose Maria del Nido means that soon he will – he will surely do so, like a triumphant bullfighter at Seville's La Maestranza, to popular acclaim and by the front door, a hero.

Sevilla, the Spanish Cup holders, opened their campaign by beating champions Real Madrid in their back yard in the Super Cup, captain Javi Navarro climbing the stairs into the Bernabeu directors' box to lift the silverware, just as he had done in June. Then, a Kanoute goal had brought Sevilla the Copa del Rey, their first domestic trophy for 59 years, against Bernd Schuster's Getafe. Less than two months on, Schuster was again the victim, having taken charge of Madrid in the meantime.

The win added to Sevilla's list of successes, which also include back-to-back UEFA Cup successes, last season's European Super Cup, when they hammered Barcelona 3-0, and a first-ever place in the Champions League, having finished third in La Liga last term. But it was not just that Sevilla – a club with a budget a fifth the size of Barcelona's, a seventh the size of Real Madrid's – had collected an incredible fifth trophy in 15 months. It was also the way they did it. They did not just beat Madrid, they hammered them, 5-3 (6-3 on aggregate; the Madrid game was the second leg).

The hosts' three goals flattered them – two from dead-balls and the other an outrageous long-range effort from new signing Royston Drenthe. Sevilla were never really in trouble, responding immediately every time Madrid threatened to get back into the game. The champions equalised twice, at 1-1 and 3-3, but both times Sevilla had retaken the lead within five minutes.

Kanoute hit a hat-trick, making it five finals out of five in which he has scored; Adriano scored the other two. It was the first time Madrid had conceded five at the Bernabeu since a Samuel Eto'o-inspired Mallorca defeated them 5-1 four years ago. No wonder president Del Nido boasted: "We are the best team in Spain. We only know how to win. What other team has managed to win five titles in 15 months? No one has done that before – and we're going to keep on winning." That was typical bluster from a man who famously described himself as "the second most important man in Seville after the Pope", but you couldn't help agreeing with him.

Madrid humiliated

True, the Super Cup is not as important as the League or the Copa del Rey, but it does matter – especially for Madrid. They were utterly humiliated, their new project in danger of coming apart at the seams after six defeats in nine pre-season matches. There were serious doubts about the make-up of the side, with huge gaps still obvious in the squad.

As one columnist joked: "Schuster did promise that the spectacular would return to the Bernabeu. Trouble is, no one expected it to be Madrid's opponents banging in five goals." It was, according to sports daily *Marca*, "the kind of result that means you don't leave the house for five days." Catalan newspaper *El Mundo Deportivo*, meanwhile, was busy gloating about a "white humiliation". No one was holding back. *AS*'s front cover ran "BEATING!" in huge yellow capital letters, describing Sevilla as "toying with Madrid like a cat toys with a mouse". *Marca* led with: "Eleven champions and 11 tortured souls."

And yet if that fear seemed to be confirmed by Schuster's edgy post-match press conference, it is surely too early to panic yet. After all, Madrid started last season just as badly. And they finished it as champions. ●

Winning habit...Sevilla players lap it up at the Bernabeu

> "When Ramos leaves, and soon he will, he should do so like a triumphant matador, to popular acclaim and by the front door"

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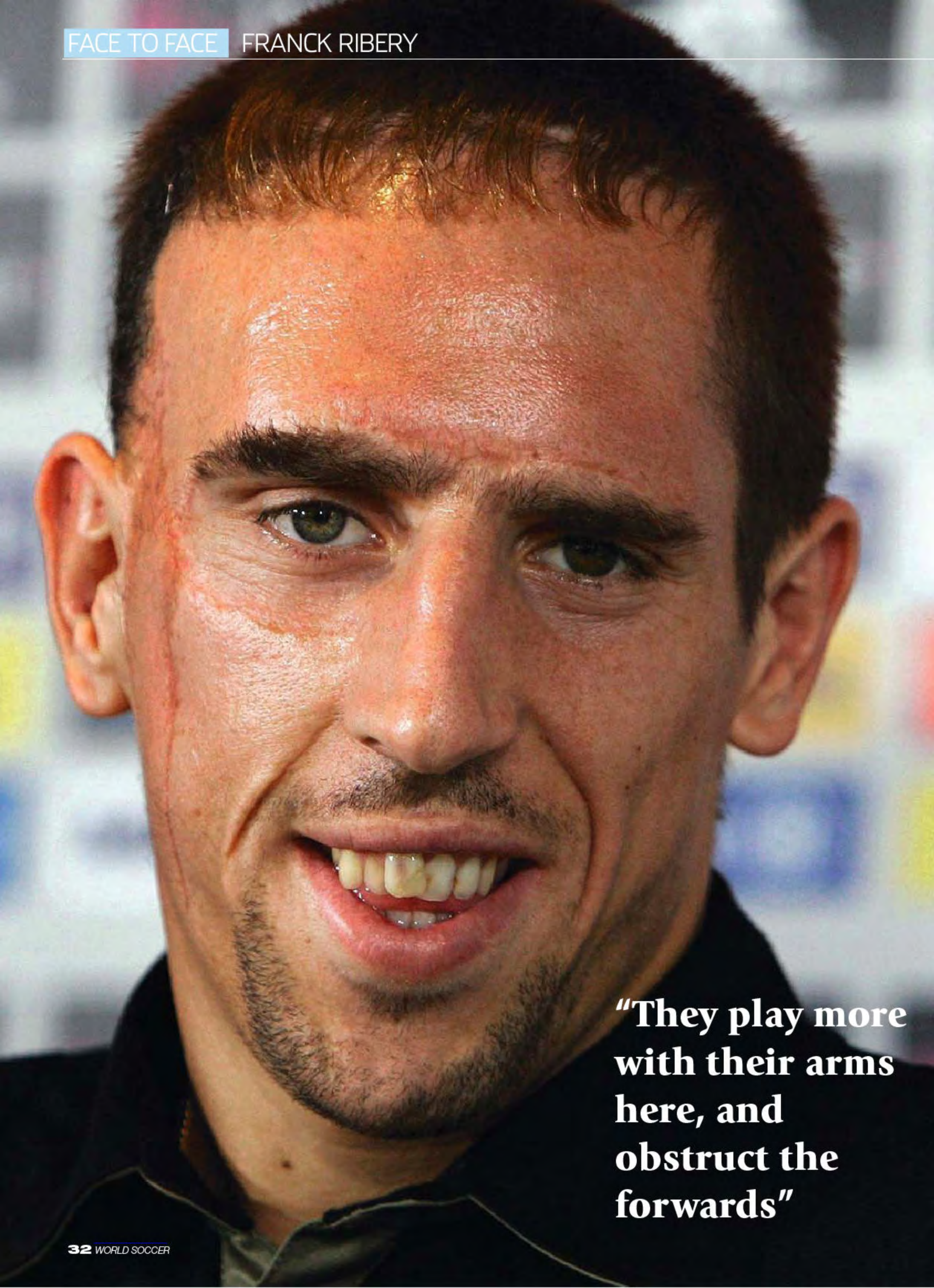

"They play more with their arms here, and obstruct the forwards"

Bayern time

The French winger on his new life in Munich

HOW DO YOU feel about being proclaimed the new superstar of the Bundesliga?
That's not a role I want or, for that matter, that I think is due to me. I have no ambition to be the superstar. All I want now that I have settled in at Bayern is to be able to work hard, fulfil what is expected of me, enjoy my football and entertain my team-mates and the fans. And I want to win titles and trophies. Then I will be happy.

What are Bayern's priorities this season, given that they are not in the Champions League?
To win the German League. We are also in the UEFA Cup; we can go all the way to the Final of that.

You personally have started well. How have you found your first few weeks at Bayern?
It was not easy to leave Marseille but I get on well with all my new team-mates, and the coach, Ottmar Hitzfeld, has helped me a lot. He gives me a lot of good advice. The team spirit is excellent – and all that helps me to do my best out on the pitch. I get on well with the coach. Mostly I talk to him with [Belgian defender] Daniel Van Buyten to translate, or [French full-back] Willy Sagnol. The first time I went to the coach's office it was so he could tell me how he wanted me to play, whether I preferred the left or the right, if I could play in behind a striker. That sort of thing.

What did you tell him?
That I prefer to play on the left but if, because of injuries or whatever else, he needed me to play on the right then I would happily do so. In the League Cup against Werder Bremen, for example, I started out on the left and later I tucked in behind Miroslav Klose like an old-fashioned No 10.

Why did you join Bayern?
I felt they were the club who really, really wanted me. There were contacts with Real Madrid and with Arsenal, but after last year's World Cup Bayern let me know in no uncertain terms that they really wanted me to go there. Even though I stayed on for another year at Marseille, they never gave up on me. I talked it through with Willy Sagnol and Bixente Lizarazu, who know German football and Bayern very well of course, and they told me how it all worked, that it was a good standard of football which would suit my game.

Were they right, from your first impressions?
Yes. But it's very different to French league football. I found out straight away that here in Germany they "play" a lot more with the arms, particularly the defenders, in obstructing forwards. But one thing I really like are the stadiums. We played a League Cup quarter-final at a third division stadium in Dusseldorf in front of more than 50,000 fans. How many fans can you get in a third division stadium in France?

Do you like the Allianz Arena?
I knew the Allianz Arena already because I played there for France in the World Cup semi-finals, and it's the best stadium I've seen in Germany. What I had not seen before I came here was the training centre. It is already very good but Bayern are in the middle of redeveloping it – lots of pitches, treatment rooms, medical staff. Highly professional. Nothing is left to chance, during the week or on matchdays.

There is a French-speaking "community" at Bayern. Did that influence you in your choice of club?
No. Of course, it's good to have Willy, Daniel and Valerien [Ismael] here but I would have come anyway and had a "proper" interpreter.

Did you expect to make such an instant impression with the fans?
I did not think about that in advance but certainly it's true that people in the city recognised me very quickly. That, for me, was a positive sign. Hopefully, I can learn enough German as soon as possible. I didn't know any of the language before I came here but I know it's very important so I've started taking lessons. Anyway, I like the city and so do my wife and daughter. It's important that the family feels at home.

You have a reputation for playing practical jokes on your team-mates. Have you maintained this at Bayern?
Yes, I have always been the same, I will not change now. I cut the ends off Daniel's socks when he was in the shower. He could not understand what had happened! He is a lot taller and heavier than me but I am quicker! Anyway, I think in football people need a sense of humour. Everything gets taken so seriously.

Who was your hero?
Diego Maradona, for me, is the best footballer of all time. In recent times, Zinedine Zidane. He was outstanding. ●

Interview by Keir Radnedge

'My career hasn't really started yet'

A starring role at the Under-20 World Cup won the US prodigy a deal with Benfica after some troubled times in Major League Soccer

AMERICAN starlet Freddy Adu was at his best during this summer's Under-20 World Cup as he captained the United States to the quarter-finals. In the group stage he hit a hat-trick against Poland in the 6-1 victory and set up both goals in the 2-1 defeat of Brazil.

The 18-year-old's performances led to interest from Celtic, Ajax, Tottenham, CSKA Moscow and Benfica, and the latter two both submitted offers that met Major League Soccer's £1million transfer demand. CSKA's offer was lucrative, sources said, but the Ghana-born player, who emigrated to the USA in 1997 when his family won a green card in a lottery, had reservations about the move.

Adu's representatives also rejected Benfica's initial offer, the stumbling block being the personal terms, but Benfica came back with a new offer, and a deal was struck immediately.

Adu played three full seasons with DC United having become the youngest professional athlete in modern US history when making his debut at the age of 14. He was midway through his first season with Real Salt Lake when securing the move to Benfica, which will earn him an annual salary of around £600,000.

Adu will also receive 5 per cent of his sell-on fee, with MLS receiving the same percentage.

What are your impressions of Benfica?
It's a club with a great history who play at the highest level in Europe and a perfect place to be at this stage of my career. They showed a lot of interest in me and I felt comfortable going there as a soccer player and as a person. I think it's a great chance for me and I'm thankful for it.

You have trained with Manchester United in the past and spoke about having a goal of playing in the Premier League. But is this a more manageable first step?
Oh yeah, for sure. As much as you love some of the big clubs in the world – Man U, Chelsea – and get to talk to some of their players and coaches at friendlies and on tours, you always want to take one step at a time. You need time to develop as a player, to adjust to the style of play, and for me, Spain, Portugal and Holland are the three leagues that I fit better in. They play with a lot of skill and they appreciate skill, and that's my game.

Any regrets about your time in MLS?
It's a little bitter-sweet, but I never regret any decisions I've made. I learned a lot in MLS and grew up a lot. Granted, people will say this and that about my play or that I didn't dominate in MLS, but I scored some goals, I contributed to a team that won the MLS Cup [the championship decider; DC United won it in 2004]. People can say what they want and criticise me. But I think at the Under-20 World Cup I changed a lot of people's minds. You don't just write off people, especially at age 18. My career hasn't even really started yet.

Are you referring to that column in *The Guardian*? [In July a journalist suggested Adu and teenage golf prodigy Michelle Wie were essentially washed up.]
I just laughed when I read it to be honest with you. It's one of those things where people write what they want. They can bring you up and take you down. That's part of being a professional athlete. You have to learn to deal with it and not let it bother you, and I'm sure that guy has nothing to say now, so, whatever.

You must be feeling good about your game after the Under-20 World Cup?

Oh yeah, I have a lot of confidence heading to Europe – it was my play in that tournament that created this opportunity for me. It was a make-or-break tournament for me, and I think I made the most of it – I played as well as I've ever played. I have a lot of goals and, right now, I'm on the perfect track, I think.

MLS and its sponsors created an environment in which some thought you would be the salvation of American soccer. Do you see pro sports differently now?
Before you go pro it's all about just playing and having fun, you don't know about anything else. Once you go pro it's a whole different animal. In some cases you are used, and you feel used, and whether you like it or not they have your rights, and you can't let that get to you. I had to be the bad guy after a few years and say: "I'm not doing this appearance. I'm not flying here to sign autographs. I don't want to do it. I have to concentrate on my play. Do you want me to produce on the field or do you just care about what I'm doing off the field?" And the League understood and was great enough to let me cut back, and from then on the focus has been on getting back to where I used to be. And right now I can honestly tell you I am exactly where I want to be.

End of the road...Adu shows the hurt after the USA lose to Austria in the Under-20 World Cup quarter-finals

"I played the best soccer of my life on trial at Manchester United. That's when I decided to leave DC United"

This season during MLS broadcasts there were almost no commercials featuring you, but the Adidas commercial featuring [17-year-old New York Red Bulls forward] Jozy Altidore is in heavy rotation. What goes through your head when you see the "next big thing"? Any jealousy?
No jealousy at all. What goes through my mind is: "I hope they don't do to Jozy what they did to me" – with all the hype and everything. It's not easy, it sidetracks you, and I'm just glad Jozy and the rest of my Under-20 team-mates are great guys and understand what kind of guy I am.

You've talked a lot recently about being back to your old self. You struggled at times during your three years at DC United and seemed a totally different player with the Under-20s. Why?
I honestly felt like I was over-coached. I had never played outside midfield before in a 3-5-2, and there were a lot of defensive responsibilities. I'm not the greatest defender in the world, and it was a tough system for me to adapt to. There were so many things put in my head that when I was on the field my confidence wore thin. I was always thinking about something, and you're not supposed to and it took a toll on me. Thomas Rongen [the Under-20s coach] knows this about me – that I'm the kind of person who you put out there and let it flow. I can't be told to do every little thing because then it gets confusing, and I was so young at the time; it was tough for me. It took a long time before I was able to get out of that mentality. I used to play really right, I never took anybody on like I used to. I wasn't aggressive. And now I'm getting all that back. It was a tough situation but I also feel like I achieved a lot at that age.

What helped change your mentality and get you back on track?
Going to Manchester United last winter and training there for two weeks. I knew I was ready to go over to Europe after that. The style of play, the calibre of player they have there. It's funny, I feel like when I play with some types of player I'm a much better player. It brings out the best in me. If I hit the ball in the right spot, those guys are there. If I make runs, they will reward you 99 per cent of the time. It's unbelievable how much of a better player I am, how much more fun I have playing with guys like that at that level. I'm not saying MLS is a bad league, but that's the way I feel. I played the best soccer of my life there [at United]. It was incredible. I didn't even know I had that in me. That opened my eyes. That's when I decided to leave DC, because I wanted to be free. I wanted to just be free to play, as I was at United, where I was allowed to make mistakes. At DC I felt like I wasn't allowed to make mistakes.

You didn't live up to the expectations some had of you in MLS, but you are the youngest player to appear for the senior US national team, you've travelled the world, hung out with David Bowie, had a kick-about with Pele, played in FIFA all-star games. That must be pretty cool for anyone, let alone a guy of your age.
All that stuff is great and a lot of fun, but my single motivation before I went pro was to be able to get my family everything they wanted, and I've been able to do that. My motivation now is to become the best player I possibly can. That's what drives me, the ambition to be the best. I want to be the best American player, and I want to be the best player on my team at some point. There are going to be bumps in the road along the way, and that's fine. But in the last three years I let it affect my game and I will never let that happen again. ●

Interview by Jason LaCanfora

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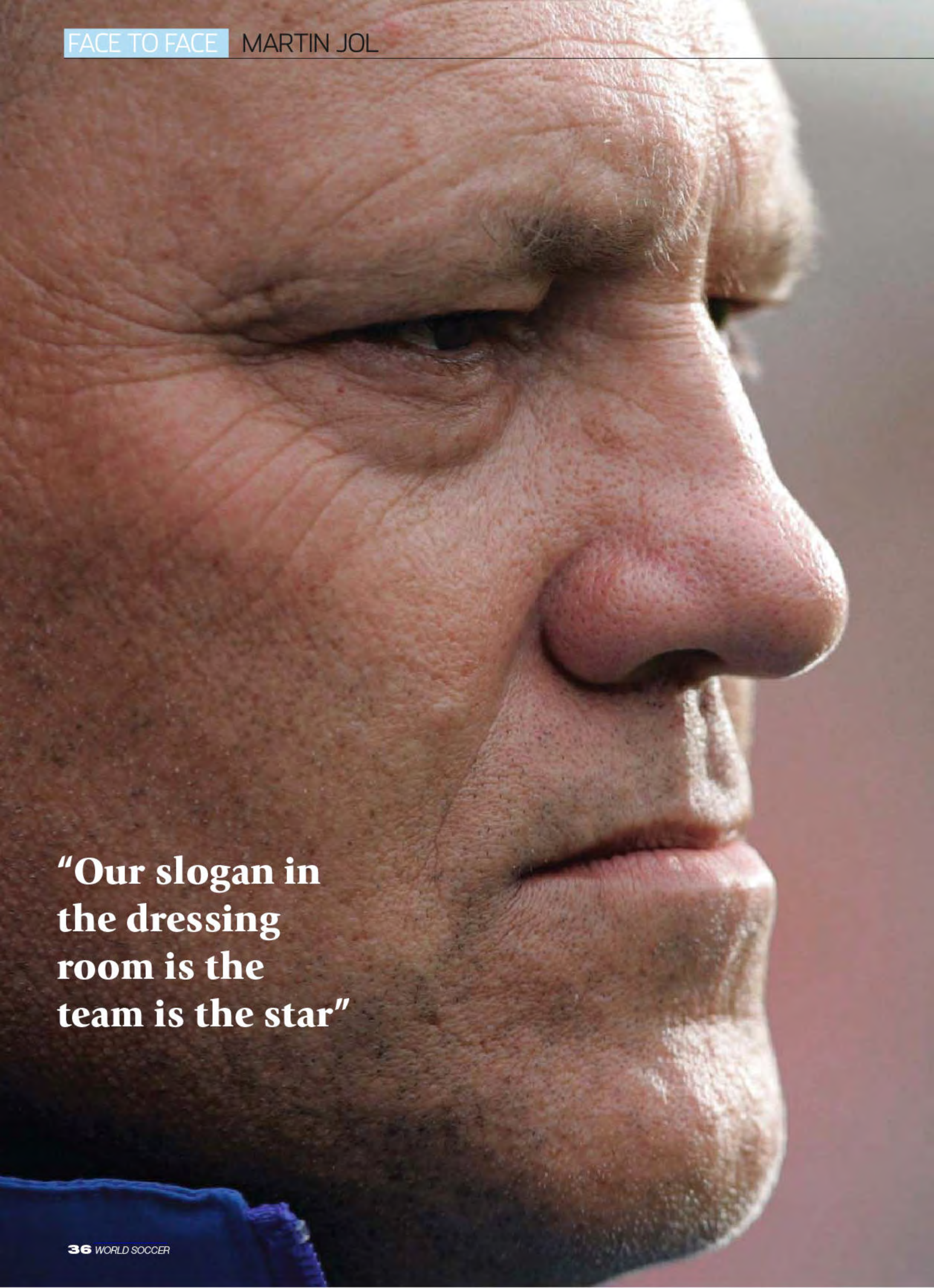

"Our slogan in the dressing room is the team is the star"

'The sky's the limit'

The Tottenham manager believes his side could be challenging for the Premier League title in two years

DO YOU FEEL under pressure to get Tottenham into a Champions League position this season?
Not at all. If you look at the players we have signed this summer, you will realise we are investing in the future of this club. Younes Kaboul is 21 and he doesn't play for his national side [France], while Gareth Bale is just 18 and he is not ready to play in the first team at a club like Chelsea. Then you have Kevin Boateng, who is another great talent at 20 years of age. So this is not just about this season, but the one after and the one after that.

But does your squad have the ability to finish in the top four?
When I came here, I said I wanted Tottenham to be a top-six team every year, and we are there now, so that's a good level of progress. My job is to develop these players as soon as possible because everyone wants us to be in the Champions League now. You have to realise that the top four have been in place for a decade in England, so it will be difficult to break that. Still, this has to be our aim.

Do you consider Spurs to be part of a "top five" then?
This is the way I prefer to look at things. We are probably the first club people would say when asked to name a top five, apart from the established four. It's important we stay in the top positions, and then anything is possible.

In what areas do your team need to improve?
We conceded more than 50 goals last season, which is too many to get into the top four. Also, we scored only 60 goals, again not enough to be in the top four. Dimitar Berbatov scored only 12 in the League, Robbie Keane 11, Jermain Defoe 10. That's not enough for a striker at a club wanting to be in the top four. So it's simple – we need to score more and concede fewer.

How long will it be before this team reach their peak?
In two years someone like Bale would be good enough for Manchester United, but he will be playing for Tottenham. The same goes for Aaron Lennon; who knows how good he could be? Guys like Berbatov, Keane and [new signing] Darren Bent will still be top players by then, so at that point we will go for the Premier League title. If the players we have here progress as I expect, the sky is the limit.

But your best players could be tempted away before you reach that point.
We lost Michael Carrick to Manchester United last summer because he came to me and said it was his dream move. At that point, I couldn't argue that United were ahead of us, so we let him go for a big fee. I would love to get to the point where players look at the chance to go to United, but think it would be best to stay at Tottenham. Berbatov could play for United right now, Keane is good enough for Liverpool, Lennon could be a success for Chelsea, but they are here and we want them to believe this is their best option.

How important was it to hang on to Berbatov for this season?
It was never an issue. There was a lot of talk about Manchester United, but the chairman would never have sanctioned a move for a player who did so well for us last time. You can see why other clubs might like him, but he is very happy at Tottenham. Our slogan in the dressing room is the team is the star, not Berbatov, Keane or [Paul] Robinson. That is probably what someone like Berbatov likes about this club.

It has been said that the four forwards you have this season form the best strikeforce in England. Do you agree?
Chelsea have quality strikers with Didier Drogba, Andrii Shevchenko and now Claudio Pizarro; Manchester United have some great options, with Wayne Rooney and Carlos Tevez; Liverpool have five strikers this season. So I don't know if our four are the best. I certainly think you need four to challenge for every trophy, so we are covered there now.

How do you fit Berbatov, Keane, Bent and Defoe into your plans?
When you have got players like we have up front, they are not just competing against each other. They will always give 100 per cent all the time, and the competition has to be good for the team. We are hoping to play a lot of matches this season, and I feel that you need four strikers to cope with that.

Could you start games with three strikers?
It is a nice idea. Bent could play on the right – he has done it in the past – but the trouble may be who will supply the crosses. Maybe you could play two up front and one in the hole, maybe Keane in there, but I haven't had the time to formulate this idea. Maybe if a team is a little below us on quality you could play with three strikers, but not against the likes of Manchester United.

Are transfer prices spinning out of control in England?
This started a couple of years ago when Chelsea paid £24million for Michael Essien and then £30m for Shevchenko. The mark has been set, so we could see this problem coming. We paid £16.5m for Bent this summer and you can question whether anyone can be worth that much. You can say the same about houses in London. I saw a nice place in Regent's Park recently. It was a two-room apartment and it cost £8m. I can't afford that, but this is the market value, so you have to pay it if you want to buy it. ●

Interview by Kevin Palmer

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AEK ATHENS

Eyes on Rivaldo

The Brazilian will be at the heart of coach Serra Ferrer's plans

Freewheeling…Rivaldo

AEK ATHENS' summer was dominated by the arrival of Brazilian star Rivaldo, who made an unexpected move from Greek champions Olympiakos after falling out with the management.

Rivaldo has been reunited with coach Lorenzo Serra Ferrer, who was in charge of Barcelona for some of the Brazilian's time in the Catalan capital. The challenge for the boss is to find the right formation to get the best from the veteran – either a 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2, to give the freewheeling Brazilian enough support.

As for Rivaldo, he is confident of achieving success, saying: "I have faith in my team-mates and the coaching staff. I believe we will do great things."

AEK made a number of other signings, including three Argentinians. Left-back Rodolfo Arruabarrena arrived from Villarreal, where he had spent six seasons. He was joined by 23-year-old central defender Federico Xavier Azcarate from Atletico Madrid, and forward Ismael Blanco from Colon Santa Fe. There were two other signings from Greek clubs – Charilaos Pappas (Olympiakos) and Tamandani Nsaliwa (Panionios).

The departures included Vassilis Lakis to PAOK Salonika and former Middlesbrough midfielder Emerson to Cypriot champions APOEL Nicosia.

AEK had to overcome Sevilla in the third qualifying round to reach this season's group stage.

WATER CARRIERS FOR BRAZILIAN STAR

Lorenzo Serra Ferrer is likely to use a 4-2-3-1, with the mobile Nikos Limberopoulos up front, three attacking midfielders (Rivaldo taking a free role) and two "water carriers". He could also go 4-4-2, with a midfield diamond of Akis Zikos at the base, Tamandani Nsaliwa holding on the right, Julio Cesar advancing on the left and Rivaldo at the point. Ismael Blanco or Manduca would join Limberopoulos.

Typical line-up: Moretto - Ramos, Dellas, Alvez, Arruabarrena - Zikos, Nsaliwa - Pappas, Rivaldo, Julio Cesar - Limberopoulos.

Mobile…Limberopoulos

AJAX

Looking up

The Amsterdammers are showing positive signs

Sharp finisher…Huntelaar (left)

LAST SEASON, Ajax were pipped to the Dutch championship by PSV Eindhoven, who claimed the title on goals scored. But the quality of the Amsterdammers summer signings suggests they could go one better this season and also progress from their Champions League group – presuming they got through their third qualifying round tie against Slavia Prague.

True, the loss of playmaker Wesley Sneijder to Real Madrid and forward Ryan Babel to Liverpool were big blows. Kenneth Perez (PSV) and Tom De Mul (Sevilla) also left, though they were considered persona non grata by coach Henk Ten Cate. Other major departees were defender Zdenek Grygera (to Juventus) and midfielder Roger (retired).

But the departures have been compensated for by the arrivals of Uruguayan forward or playmaker Luis Suarez (Groningen), Danish winger Dennis Rommedahl (Charlton), right-sided midfielder Kennedy Bakircioglu (Twente) and veteran Spanish striker Pablo Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao). Jurgen Colin (Norwich) will provide back-up at right-back, while Belgians Laurent Delorge (Den Haag) and Jan Vertonghen (back on loan from RKC) will offer midfield back-up.

In defence, Jaap Stam is still going strong at 35 and remains a cornerstone. In attack, Klaas-Jan Huntelaar has shown he is a sharp finisher.

On top of that, Ajax are still producing their own stars – Hedwiges Maduro will come in for injured midfielder Edgar Davids during the early stages of the season – but it will be the established names who will be crucial in Europe.

HUNTELAAR THE MAIN STRIKER

Ajax will play a familiar 4-3-3, with Luis Suarez just behind striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar. Gabri and Edgar Davids (or Hedwiges Maduro) provide support from midfield. Dennis Rommedahl and Kennedy Bakircioglu are the first-choice wingers, with Jaap Stam and John Heitinga, who can also play in midfield, in central defence.

Typical line-up: Stekelenburg - Ogararu, Stam, Heitinga, Emanuelson - Gabri, Davids, Suarez - Bakircioglu, Huntelaar, Rommedahl.

Versatile…Heitinga

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH LORENZO SERRA FERRER

Spaniard who was previously in charge of Real Betis and Barcelona. He recently signed a four-year contract extension.

THE PLAYER RIVALDO

Veteran Brazilian midfielder who quit Olympiakos this summer after a row about money. Joined city rivals AEK insisting that his family is settled in the Greek capital.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH HENK TEN CATE

Former amateur player who has become a highly successful coach. Spent three years as assistant to Frank Rijkaard at Barcelona before returning to Holland to take the Ajax job.

THE PLAYER JAAP STAM

Appointed team captain on his arrival at Ajax in January last year and is the rock on which the defence is built. Has plenty of European experience, too.

ANDERLECHT

Split personality

The Belgian champions are kings at home, but paupers abroad

Title triumph…Vercauteren is chaired

ANDERLECHT ARE THE most successful club in Belgian football and have been champions for the past two seasons. Yet they have been singularly unsuccessful in their recent Champions League campaigns, having finished bottom of their group three years running – last season, behind Milan, AEK Athens and Lille; 2005-06, behind Chelsea, Liverpool and Betis; and 2004-05, behind Internazionale, Werder Bremen and Valencia, when they lost all six games. This term, they had to beat Fenerbahce in the third qualifying round to even reach the group stage.

At home, Anderlecht are kings. As well as winning the championship last term, they swept the board in the player awards. Striker Mohammed Tchite was voted player of the year, Argentinian midfielder Lucas Biglia was young player of the year, and Daniel Zitka took the best goalkeeper accolade. Tchite thus emulated his team-mate Mbark Boussoufa, winner of the top player prize in 2006.

Despite guiding the Brussels club to two straight league titles, coach Franky Vercauteren is a much-criticised figure, accused of neglecting style in an all-out push for the functional. His differences with influential Egyptian midfielder Ahmed Hassan have worsened the situation.

Anderlecht lost highly-rated young defender Anthony Vanden Borre over the summer, to Fiorentina. The arrivals were left-sided midfielder Triquinho, on a six-month loan from Brazil's Sao Caetano, and former Charleroi striker Cyril Thereau, from Steaua Bucharest. The latter, along with Argentinian Nicolas Frutos, will provide competition for first-choice forwards Tchite and Mbo Mpenza.

ORGANISATION IS VITAL COMPONENT

Organisation is everything for Franky Vercauteren, the vital component of a successful side in the modern game. A pre-season shock was the sight of centre-back Jelle Van Damme as a defensive midfielder, but the switch seems to have worked well. The key men in the 4-4-2 set-up are right-sided midfielder Ahmed Hassan and young deep-lying attacker Mbark Boussoufa.

Typical line-up: Zitka - Wasilewski, Pareja, De Man, Deschacht - Hassan, Biglia, Van Damme, Boussoufa - Tchite, Mpenza.

Position switch…Van Damme

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH FRANKY VERCAUTEREN

The former international (63 caps) spent five seasons as assistant to Aime Anthuenis and Hugo Broos at Anderlecht, becoming head coach in 2005.

THE PLAYER MBARK BOUSSOUFA

Born in Holland, developed in England, at Chelsea, and has represented Morocco, his parents' homeland. Now starring in Belgium, winning the country's player of the year award in 2006.

Exciting presence…Fabregas

ARSENAL

Turmoil and talent

There may be problems off the pitch, but there is no denying Arsenal's star quality

ON PAPER, ARSENAL are in a state of flux and unlikely to challenge for honours at home or abroad. The departure of vice-chairman David Dein and Thierry Henry, the continued speculation about the future ownership of the club, and Arsene Wenger's failure to agree a new contract beyond next summer have combined to give the impression of a club on the verge of meltdown.

But it is not all doom and gloom. Arsenal got a good price for Henry (£16million), just as they did with past high-profile departures such as Nicolas Anelka and Patrick Vieira. Wenger's timing in the transfer market has proved impeccable, so Arsenal are unlikely to miss Henry or, indeed, Freddie Ljungberg, sold to West Ham after nine seasons. Brazil-born Croatian international Eduardo da Silva could actually prove to be a more direct finisher than Henry, as could tall young Dane Niklas Bendtner, so successful on loan at Birmingham last season.

A more pressing question is whether such a young side – only three first-team players (Jens Lehmann, Gilberto Silva and William Gallas) are over 26 – are up to the challenge. The youngsters who did so well in reaching last season's League Cup Final such as midfielder Denilson and full-back Armand Traore are still raw recruits. And neither of the new signings, Eduardo and right-back Bakary Sagna, has much experience of the Champions League, in which Arsenal had to get past Sparta Prague in the third qualifying round.

Nevertheless, a side containing Cesc Fabregas, Gilberto Silva and the emerging talent of Robin Van Persie have the potential, on their day, to be the most exciting in Europe.

CAN EDUARDO GIVE FINISHING TOUCH?

New signing Bakary Sagna could take over at right-back from Emmanuel Eboue, who could move into midfield. That in turn could make it difficult for Tomas Rosicky and Alexander Hleb to both feature there. Denilson and Abou Diaby are exciting new talents in midfield, but nobody knows whether Eduardo can provide the finishing touch.

Typical line-up: Lehmann - Sagna, Gallas, Toure, Clichy - Eboue, Fabregas, Gilberto Silva, Hleb - Van Persie, Eduardo.

Potential right-back…Sagna

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER ARSENE WENGER

The Professor's Arsenal future may be uncertain, but he is a man of honour and highly unlikely to break his contract.

THE PLAYER CESC FABREGAS

Coveted by Real Madrid but unlikely to leave Arsenal while Wenger is in charge. Though only just 20, Fabregas has already played more than 100 Premier League games and is developing a combative side to his cultured game.

BARCELONA

The fab four

With the addition of Thierry Henry, Barca's "fantasticos" could set Europe alight

Case for the defence...Toure

ON PAPER, BARCELONA, winners of the Champions League in 2006, are the most exciting team on the planet, with new signing Thierry Henry joining Ronaldinho, Lionel Messi and Samuel Eto'o in a forward line straight out of fantasy football. In reality, coach Frank Rijkaard faces the unenviable task of telling at least one of the "fantasticos" that they will not make his starting line-up.

Henry's arrival from Arsenal grabbed all the headlines over the summer, but there was plenty of other transfer activity, most of it designed to tighten up a creaking defence and avoid the disappointment of the last few weeks of last season when Real Madrid pipped Barca to the league title on a better head-to-head record. Defensive midfielder Yaya Toure (from Monaco), left-back Eric Abidal (Lyon) and centre-back Gabriel Milito (Zaragoza) will all help to improve matters at the back. But Rijkaard faces a tougher task in improving discipline in the forward department, where Ronaldinho and Eto'o did not see eye to eye last season. How will they cope with the arrival of another major ego in the form of Henry?

Rijkaard, who it had been rumoured would leave this summer, also faces tough decisions in midfield, with the future of playmaker Deco in question as we went to press.

If the coach gets it right, it could be magical. If it all goes wrong, he will be out.

...BUT FOUR INTO THREE WON'T GO

Frank Rijkaard must decide who to leave out from the attacking quartet of Ronaldinho, Lionel Messi, Thierry Henry and Samuel Eto'o. He is likely to attempt rotation, with Messi expected to lose out at the start of the season given his recent exertions at the Copa America. The coach also has plenty of options in defence, with Edmilson, Lilian Thuram, Rafael Marquez and Oleguer all challenging for starting places.

Copa exertions...Messi

Typical line-up: Valdes - Zambrotta, Puyol, Milito, Abidal - Xavi, Iniesta, Deco - Ronaldinho, Henry, Eto'o.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH FRANK RIJKAARD

Despite his coolness under pressure, the Dutchman was tipped to take a sabbatical this season. But he has stayed on and could reach new heights this season.

THE PLAYER RONALDINHO

Criticised for being overweight, overtaken by Kaka as the world's leading player and irked by suggestions that leading Brazilian players were drunk at last year's World Cup, how will he respond in 2007-08?

Winning look...BATE's Platonov v FH

BATE BORISOV

Big in Belarus

The Belorussian champions are punching above their weight this season

BATE BORISOV won the Cup and League in Belarus last year and are well on course to retain the championship this term. In Europe, they have been punching well above their weight, reaching the Champions League third qualifying round and a tie against Steaua Bucharest after dispatching APOEL Nicosia of Cyprus and Iceland's FH in the opening rounds.

The club, from the industrial city of Borisov, have a renowned youth system. Previous graduates include current national team players Alexander Hleb and Vitali Kutuzov, and many members of the current side came through the ranks, including defender Artem Radkov, one of the team's leaders, and the experienced, tough-tackling Dmitry Likhtarovich.

Other key players include Sergey Bliznuk, who scored the winning goal against APOEL, who had led 2-0 after the first leg but lost the return 3-0. Apart from Russian full-backs Anri Hagush and Vitaliy Kazantsev, the team is entirely made up of Belorussians.

Coach Igor Kriushenko was in defiant mood ahead of the Steaua game. "I always tell my players that everything is possible in football," he said. "Before the second leg against APOEL I showed the players a video of our 4-0 win against 1860 Munich from five years ago. I reminded them that with great commitment we can be a force to be reckoned with."

KRIUSHENKO PLAYS IT SAFE

Usually, Igor Kriushenko prefers a 4-4-2 system, but in Europe he may opt for 4-5-1, with Vitaliy Rodionov as the lone forward and Sergey Bliznuk buzzing behind him. The experienced Olexander Yermakovich and Dmitry Likhtarovich play the holding roles in midfield, with Igor Stasevich on the left and Sergey Krivets making pacy, dangerous forays down the right. At the back, Artem Radkov, who started as a wing-back, will be in his best position, in the centre.

Typical line-up: Fedorovich - Hagush, Radkov, Filipenko, Kazantsev - Krivets, Yermakovich, Likhtarovich, Stasevich, Bliznuk - Rodionov.

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH IGOR KRIUSHENKO

Credited with turning the club around. Since he took over, BATE have become second only to Dinamo Minsk in terms of number of domestic league title wins.

THE PLAYER SERGEY BLIZNUK

Energetic attacking midfielder or second striker. His best position is behind a lone forward from where he can create chances for his team-mates and hit the target himself. The club's leading scorer last season with 11 goals.

BENFICA

Life after Simao

The Lisbon club are having to come to terms with losing their star player, and there has also been a change of coach

Creativity...Rui Costa

AN AIR OF uncertainty surrounded the Stadium of Light after the sacking of coach Fernando Santos and the sale of star player Simao Sabrosa to Atletico Madrid. After a lacklustre start to the season and a deterioration in his relationship with club president Luis Filipe Vieira, Santos was replaced by Jose Antonio Camacho. The Spaniard knows Benfica well, having previously led them from 2002 to 2004.

Simao will be badly missed. He scored 95 goals in 230 games and showed great creativity on the wings and precision from set-pieces.

The two-time European champions have invested in youth, bringing in American teenager Freddy Adu and Argentinian Under-20 World Cup winner Angel Di Maria.

After making the Champions League quarter-finals in 2005-06, Benfica fell at the group stage last season. This season, assuming they beat FC Copenhagen in the third qualifying round, the club will be relying on veterans Rui Costa, Luisao and Petit to lead them into the knockout stages.

Rui Costa is pushing 33 but is still the player with most creativity and flair in the side. Brazilian defender Luisao has been rock-solid in his four seasons at the club. Petit will once again be entrusted with the midfield ball-winning work, a task he has done to perfection in five years at the club. Luisao says: "Benfica were not only Simao. We are a strong unit."

SYSTEM CHANGE FOR CAMACHO

With Simao Sabrosa gone, Jose Antonio Camacho will not have any wingers and will therefore use a midfield diamond in a 4-4-2 formation. Rui Costa will be at the heart of things in midfield. Forwards Oscar Cardozo and Nuno Gomes should get plenty of service, while at the back Benfica will again rely on central defender Luisao to provide leadership.

Typical line-up: Butt - Zoro, David Luiz, Luisao, Leo - Petit, Nuno Assis, Katsouranis, Rui Costa - Nuno Gomes, Cardozo.

Service...Nuno Gomes

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH JOSE ANTONIO CAMACHO

Fiery, passionate boss who led Benfica to triumph in the Portuguese Cup in 2004 during his previous spell in charge.

THE PLAYER RUI COSTA

The team will play to the maestro's tune. Missed most of last season with a series of injuries; now, everyone expects a lot from the No 10.

BESIKTAS

Strong on Saglam

The new coach was charged with making the Black Eagles take off in Europe

Time limitations...Saglam

AS USUAL, Besiktas, who last won the Turkish league title in 2003, underwent major changes during the close season. Ertugrul Saglam has been installed as coach after the Black Eagles parted company with Jean Tigana, despite finishing runners-up to Fenerbahce last term.

Saglam, a former Besiktas player and whose name means strong in Turkish, transformed Kayserispor from relegation candidates to European contenders over the past two seasons. However, he was left with little time to construct a competitive unit in time for the Istanbul club's European campaign. Nevertheless, Moldova's Sheriff Tiraspol were comfortably dispatched in the Champions League second qualifying round, setting up a clash with Zurich for entry to the group stage.

Fenerbahce and Turkey's Rustu Recber was one of three keepers signed during the summer following the departure of Croatian Vedran Runje to Lens. Other new arrivals included Senegalese defender Lamine Diatta, from Saint-Etienne, Chilean left-sided midfielder Rodrigo Tello (Sporting Lisbon), winger Mehmet Yozgatli (Fenerbahce) and French defensive midfielder Edouard Cisse (Paris Saint-Germain).

A successful run in Europe is always welcome, but Saglam's priorities may lie closer to home.

WHO GETS TO BE PLAYMAKER?

The big decision for Ertugrul Saglam is who to give the playmaking duties to. If the coach wants precision and reliability, he will choose Brazilian Ricardinho. If he wants flair, Argentinian Matias Delgado is his man. The key to a strong showing from Besiktas is effective wing-play and maintaining a high tempo.

Typical line-up: Rustu - Serdar, Ibrahim Toroman, Gokhan, Ibrahim Uzulmez - Mehmet Yozgatli, Cisse, Tello - Ricardinho/Delgado - Nobre, Bobo.

Flair player...Delgado

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ERTUGRUL SAGLAM

Former Besiktas player and a rising star as a coach, having made his name with Samsunspor and Kayserispor. Still only 38.

THE PLAYER BOBO

The Brazilian striker was Besiktas' top scorer last season and started this campaign well, too.

CELTIC

Bhoys to men

After reaching the Champions League knockout stage last season, the team have been expected to produce a repeat

Vital goals...Vennegoor of Hesselink

SCOTTISH CHAMPIONS Celtic raised the bar considerably with their Champions League exploits last season, when they qualified from their group alongside Manchester United and then took eventual winners Milan to extra-time in the first knockout round.

This term, fans expect a repeat performance at least from Gordon Strachan's men, even though the team face a tougher domestic challenge from a Rangers side enjoying a revival under Walter Smith. Celtic faced a third qualifying round tie against Spartak Moscow as their first step in Europe.

There were two notable departures this summer, long-serving captain and midfielder Neil Lennon joining Nottingham Forest and striker Craig Beattie joining West Brom, but there were more arrivals. Former Italian Under-21 midfielder Massimo Donati joined from Milan for around £3million, while Scott Brown became, at £4.4m from Hibernian, the record signing between Scottish clubs. The 22-year-old midfielder has already played for the senior Scotland side.

Two antipodean strikers have also joined – New Zealander Chris Killen (also from Hibs) and Australian Scott McDonald (Motherwell) – while young defender John Kennedy is available once more having spent the past two years on the sidelines because of injury.

The key men, though, are well established – Dutch striker Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink, who weighed in with vital goals last term, and Japanese midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura, whose free-kicks are one of Celtic's best attacking weapons. The Bhoys will need big performances from both.

DONATI ADDS CLASS TO MIDFIELD

New signing Massimo Donati and Shunsuke Nakamura will be the key figures in a four-man midfield, their cultured approach complementing the more forceful contributions of Scott Brown and Paul Hartley. Thomas Gravesen and Jiri Jarosik are other midfield options. Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink should lead the attack, with Scott McDonald alongside.

Typical line-up: Boruc - Wilson, Pressley, McManus, Naylor - Hartley, Donati, Brown, Nakamura - Vennegoor of Hesselink, McDonald.

Cultured approach...Donati

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER GORDON STRACHAN

Recovered from his bad start at Celtic – an early exit from the 2005-06 Champions League – by winning back-to-back Scottish titles and steering Celtic through their Champions League group last term.

THE PLAYER SHUNSUKE NAKAMURA

Hugely influential as a playmaker and is also a free-kick expert. Although the Japanese midfielder still has two years on his contract, Celtic are already trying to negotiate a new deal.

CHELSEA

Mind games

With expectations sky high, Jose Mourinho and his side are under even greater pressure to succeed

Big purchase...Malouda (left)

CHELSEA'S REPUTATION AS the most "political" club in European football was confirmed this summer following the appointment of Avram Grant, a confidant of owner Roman Abramovich, as director of football.

The move was officially welcomed by head coach Jose Mourinho, who insisted: "My work will not change. Avram makes my life easier, he is a good guy. If I wasn't happy, then you would see me around the corner snarling." However, the arrival of Grant, a former Israeli national team boss, can only add to the pressure on Mourinho.

Chelsea kicked off the season with a host of key players missing because of injury. Nevertheless, the squad has been reinforced by five new signings, all frees except for £13million Florent Malouda. Tal Ben Haim and Alex will provide the defensive cover that was lacking last season following the departures of Robert Huth and William Gallas, while Steve Sidwell is a midfield all-rounder whose presence raises further questions about the future of Michael Ballack. In attack, Peruvian international Claudio Pizarro will provide aerial strength.

Chelsea are again unlikely to win any prizes for aesthetics. But the introduction of Malouda, a more reliable crosser of the ball than Arjen Robben, could prove highly productive.

The nature of Abramovich's high-profile investment ensures that expectations remain sky high. But few would be surprised if Chelsea improve on last season's semi-final exit.

WHERE DOES BALLACK FIT IN?

With the emergence of John Obi Mikel as a genuine holding midfielder (in preference to Claude Makelele), the arrival of left-winger Florent Malouda, and given the importance of Frank Lampard and Michael Essien, it is hard to see how Michael Ballack can fit into midfield. New signings Tal Ben Haim, Alex, Steve Sidwell and Claudio Pizarro bolster a squad that ran thin last season.

Typical line-up: Cech - Paulo Ferreira, Terry, Ricardo Carvalho, A Cole - Essien, Mikel, Lampard, Malouda - Shevchenko, Drogba.

Out of place?...Ballack

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER JOSE MOURINHO

Will we see a more mellow Mourinho this season? The Portuguese, who some had predicted would leave Stamford Bridge, now has to cope with the presence of new director of football Avram Grant.

THE PLAYER DIDIER DROGBA

The reigning African footballer of the year had an outstanding campaign in 2006-07, finishing as the Premier League's top scorer. A powerful, intimidating figurehead for Chelsea's attack.

FC COPENHAGEN

Pride of the north

The Danish champions plan to cement their place as Scandinavia's top club

Well-established...Gravgaard

BENFICA STOOD in the way of FC Copenhagen becoming the first Danish side to reach the Champions League group stage twice. Last season, the team showed encouraging signs in that phase, at least in their home games, beating Manchester United and Celtic and drawing with Benfica.

Over the summer, Copenhagen bolstered their squad by signing midfielder Rasmus Wurtz from AaB Aalborg, Czech winger Libor Sionko from Rangers and prolific striker Morten Nordstrand from Nordsjaelland. Mads Laudrup, son of Michael, may also feature this season.

Nordstrand scored four goals in his first five games for the club as the champions recovered from a surprise defeat to Nordsjaelland on the opening day of the Danish Superliga campaign. Coach Stale Solbakken said his side had been suffering a "title-winning hangover".

The key established players include captain and central defender Michael Gravgaard and Swedish forward Marcus Allback.

The greatest concern was at right-back, with Danish international Lars Jacobsen gone to Bundesliga side Nurnberg and no direct replacement signed. William Kvist was playing as a stop-gap but told Solbakken he would do so only until Christmas.

Reaching the Champions League group stage regularly is the long-term aim for Copenhagen, to cement their place as Scandinavia's top club. Apart from anything else it would improve their ability to attract home more current internationals such as Jesper Gronkjaer and Niclas Jensen, while keeping hold of talents such as Jacobsen.

ATTACK AT HOME, CAUTION AWAY

Copenhagen tend to play 4-4-2 in domestic matches, but a more cautious 4-5-1 in away games in Europe, with only Marcus Allback up front and Hjalte Bo Norregaard introduced in midfield at the expense of Morten Nordstrand. Jesper Gronkjaer provides pace on the flanks for counter-attacks; Atiba Hutchinson is allowed a free role.

Typical line-up: Christiansen - Kvist, Gravgaard, Hangeland, Jensen - Hutchinson, Silberbauer, Wurtz, Gronkjaer - Allback, Nordstrand.

Front man...Allback

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH STALE SOLBAKKEN

Former Norwegian international who played a season at Wimbledon. Fitted with a pacemaker after suffering a heart attack during training.

THE PLAYER MICHAEL GRAVGAARD

Imposing Danish international central defender who leads from the back as club captain.

CSKA MOSCOW

Forward march

The former Soviet army side are a rising force in the European game

Notable Brazilian...Vagner Love

CSKA HAVE A growing European pedigree. As 2006 Russian champions, they have qualified automatically for the Champions League group stage for the first time, though it will not be their first appearance at this stage of the competition. Last season, they finished third in their group having beaten Arsenal 1-0 at home and then drawn 0-0 in London. In 2004-05, CSKA also finished third in their group, behind Chelsea and Porto, and went on to become the first Russian side to win the UEFA Cup.

The meetings against Chelsea were controversial because of apparent links between the clubs. At the time, CSKA were sponsored by Sibneft, then owned by Roman Abramovich, in a record £9million-a-year deal. The connections with Sibneft were ended after the company was sold to Gazprom, who now fund the new force in Russian football, Zenit St Petersburg.

CSKA, the army team during Soviet times, are now sponsored by Vneshtorgbank, Russia's second largest bank, for £3.5m a year. Many of the players whose transfers to Moscow were financed with Sibneft cash, are still with the club, notably Brazilians Daniel Carvalho, Dudu Cearense, Jo and Vagner Love. Another Brazilian, midfielder Ramon, is an exciting new addition.

CSKA have struggled in the Russian League in recent weeks because of injuries to keeper Igor Akinfeev and Daniel Carvalho, and the absence of Jo and Vagner Love during the Copa America. But coach Valeri Gazzayev is looking on the bright side. "There is always sunshine after rain," he says. "So I have no doubt the team will look different by the start of the Champions League."

FOUR AT THE BACK WHEN UP AGAINST IT

Valeri Gazzayev prefers a 3-5-2, but adds a fourth defender (right-back Deividas Semberas) against stronger opposition. Captain and centre-back Sergei Ignashevich is a commanding presence in the air and has a powerful shot. Yuri Zhirkov's speed and vision makes him a dangerous threat on the left flank. Dudu Cearense will play behind the strikers during Daniel Carvalho's injury absence.

Typical line-up: Mandrykin - V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky - Krasic, Rahimic, Aldonin, Dudu Cearense, Zhirkov - Jo, Vagner Love.

Speed and vision...Zhirkov

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH VALERI GAZZAYEV

The former USSR striker coached unfancied Alaniya Vladikavkaz to the league title in 1995, since when he has become CSKA's most successful coach. Had a spell in charge of the Russian national side in 2002-03.

THE PLAYER VAGNER LOVE

The striker's performances at CSKA have earned him caps from Brazil coach Dunga. The previous boss, Carlos Alberto Parreira, considered Europe-based players only from the major western leagues.

DINAMO BUCHAREST

Eastern promise

Reinforced by summer signings, the Romanian champions are confident they can at last achieve success in Europe

Optimism…Ionel Danciulescu and co

DINAMO BUCHAREST have had little success in the Champions League: they were comprehensively beaten by Manchester United in the third qualifying round in 2004-05 and lost to Polonia Warsaw and Club Brugge in the second qualifying round in 1999-2000 and 2002-03 respectively. In the 2005-06 UEFA Cup, Dinamo thrashed Everton 5-2 on aggregate, but then failed to progress from a tough group stage. They fared better in last season's edition, recording group wins over Besiktas and Bayer Leverkusen to make it through, but then lost against Benfica in the first knockout round.

However, recent performances at home and abroad have raised hopes that this season's European campaign might bring greater success. Dinamo were the runaway winners of the Romanian League last term and the triumph included home-and-away wins over Bucharest rivals Rapid and Steaua for the first time in the same season. Such is the optimism at the club that the main shareholders have raised this season's budget from £5million to £10m.

New signings include Romanian international striker Daniel Oprita, from Steaua, and Cameroonian midfielder Frederic Bondoma Ayangma, while a number of former players have been re-signed from foreign clubs, notably Florin Bratu (Nantes), Valentin Nastase (Ascoli), Iannis Zicu (Internazionale) and Flavius Stoican (Shakhtar Donetsk).

Dinamo were set to face Lazio in the Champions League third qualifying round.

REDNIC KEEPS HIS OPTIONS OPEN

Coach Mircea Rednic has plenty of options. "My most difficult task is to name the right line-up from the 28 good players I have," he says. Keeper Bogdan Lobont is a powerful and vocal presence, while central defender Radu Stefan is seen as a worthy successor to Cristian Chivu. In attack, Claudiu Niculescu is an aerial threat.

Typical line-up: Lobont - Blay, Stefan, Moti, Pulhac - Munteanu, Zicu, Fernandez, Margaritescu - Danciulescu, Niculescu.

Aerial threat…Niculescu

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MIRCEA REDNIC

The former international defender has earned a reputation in Romania as a forward-thinking coach who is never afraid to try new ideas. Won the 2003 league title with Rapid Bucharest.

THE PLAYER CLAUDIU NICULESCU

The Romanian international striker was the domestic league's top scorer last season with 18 goals, and his partnership with Ionel Danciulescu produced 33 of Dinamo's total of 63 goals.

DINAMO ZAGREB

On minus Eduardo

Summer sales have not dampened the Croatians' ambitions

Game-turner…Luka Modric

THIS SEASON, Dinamo Zagreb, Croatia's most successful and powerful club, started their bid for a third successive league title in confident style, winning all their first four games under new coach Branko Ivankovic. They also reached the Champions League third qualifying round, where they faced Werder Bremen, with home-and-away wins against Domzale of Slovenia (5-2 on aggregate).

Even more impressively, these results were achieved without two key players from last season – Vedran Corluka and Eduardo da Silva, who joined Manchester City and Arsenal respectively over the summer. There have been a number of new arrivals, including German goalkeeper Georg Koch (from Duisburg), two very talented Croatian internationals, Ivica Vrdoljak and Mario Mandzukic (both from Zagreb), and Franka Guelu, a product of the ASEC academy in Ivory Coast.

In addition, Tomislav Sokota returned from Portugal after six seasons with Benfica and Porto.

The most important player, though, will again be midfielder and captain Luka Modric. The clever little playmaker has great technique and the ability to turn a game, which is vital at this level.

SOKOTA TAKES LONE STRIKER ROLE

Dinamo play 4-2-3-1, with four attacking players and two holding midfielders, Ognjen Vukojevic and Chago, whose job is to not only break down opposition attacks but also to help set up the forward forays of full-backs Etto and Hrvoje Cale. Behind lone forward Tomislav Sokota, Mario Mandzukic is the most dangerous of the attacking midfielders.

Typical line-up: Koch - Etto, Schildenfeld, Drpic, Cale - Vukojevic, Chago - Guelu, Mandzukic, Modric - Sokota.

Spearhead…Tomislav Sokota

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH BRANKO IVANKOVIC

An experienced coach and clever tactician who led Iran at the 2006 World Cup. He was also Miroslav Blazevic's right-hand man at the 1998 World Cup as Croatia finished third.

THE PLAYER LUKA MODRIC

The best player in the Croatian League and the national team. When he's in the mood, Dinamo usually win.

DYNAMO KYIV

Sack race

Coach Demyanenko will get the chop if he presides over another European failure

Last link…Rebrov

DYNAMO KYIV ARE Ukraine's most successful club, though since the emergence of Shakhtar Donetsk they are no longer the wealthiest.

Last season, Dynamo regained the league title after finishing second to Shakhtar three years running. They also beat Shakhtar in the Cup Final and Super Cup. However, in the Champions League, they once again failed to raise their game, finishing bottom of a group that also contained Lyon, Real Madrid and Steaua Bucharest.

Dynamo president Ihor Surkis sent out a warning ahead of this season's campaign that things must improve. "The forthcoming European season is very important for our club," he said. "We've spent more than £8million on new players with a clear purpose – to wipe out the disgrace that we brought to our fans in the Champions League last season. For our coach, Anatoliy Demyanenko, there is no chance to make the same mistakes. If Dynamo flop again in Europe, he will be dismissed the next day."

Those new signings include Senegalese defender Pape Diakhate, Guinean striker Ismail Bangoura and Brazilian attacking midfielder Michael.

The latter joins an already strong Brazilian contingent that includes creative playmaker Carlos Correa and Diogo Rincon, who excels in the linking role between midfield and attack. The team's other key figure is Oleh Husiev, famous for his dashing raids and precise crosses. Serhii Rebrov is also back at the club, though he now operates in central midfield instead of up front. He is the last link with the side that reached the Champions League semi-finals in 1999.

VASCHUK'S PLACE IN DANGER

Dynamo tend to play a 4-4-2, though sometimes also a 4-4-1-1 or 3-5-2. Vladislav Vaschuk's position as sweeper is under threat from new signing Pape Diakhate. Rodrigo is the stopper. In a more attacking formation, Dynamo play without a right-back, Oleh Husiev taking over the whole right flank. Diogo Rincon is effective behind lone striker Kleber.

Typical line-up: Shovkovskyi - Markovic, Vaschuk, Rodrigo, Nesmachnyi - Husiev, Mikhalik, Correa, Michael - Diogo Rincon, Kleber.

Threat…Diakhate

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ANATOLIY DEMYANENKO

A former Dynamo captain who spent the bulk of his career at the club. Took over as head coach in 2005 and steered the team to their first league title for three years last season.

THE PLAYER OLEH HUSIEV

Unselfish, pacy and totally committed right-sided midfielder who started his career at Arsenal Kyiv. Has a never-say-die attitude, subtle skills and an eye for goal.

ELFSBORG

Svensson support

The return of Anders and Mathias has worked wonders for the smalltown club

Star turn…Anders Svensson

ELFSBORG, SWEDISH champions for the first time in 45 years, are one of the country's most ambitious clubs.

The Boras-based outfit began their remarkable revival after years as also-rans in 2005, when they moved from the Eyravallen stadium to the modern Boras Arena. They then underlined their new-found resolution by bringing home former star players Anders Svensson and Mathias Svensson, from England.

Midfielder Anders spent a number of years at Southampton, while striker Mathias (no relation) had spells with Portsmouth, Crystal Palace, Charlton, Derby and Norwich.

Since the league triumph, coach Magnus Haglund has seen to it that things have not gone stale. After a cautious start to the new season, Elfsborg have found their playing rhythm and now have a good chance of retaining the title.

Mid-season signings include stopper Fredrik Bjorck from Helsingborgs and striker Fredrik Berglund from FC Copenhagen, back for a second time. Berglund, a favourite during his first spell, should enjoy the service of the ball-playing midfielders – Svensson, Stefan Ishizaki and Samuel Holmen. Midfield, of which Svensson is the boss, is the team's strongest department.

Elfsborg play a stylish passing game in contrast to many of their local rivals, and a well-balanced performance against Hungary's Debrecen in the Champions League second qualifying round augured well for their European campaign. Valencia, twice Champions League finalists, lay between them and the group stage.

KEENE GIVES ATTACK FLEXIBILITY

The formation changed from 4-5-1 to a more flexible 4-4-2 with the arrival of forward James Keene last winter. The Englishman plays alongside Mathias Svensson. In defence, Andreas Augustsson is the elegant king-pin. Martin Andersson and Daniel Mobaeck link up well on the right. Joakim Sjohage and Fredrik Berglund are options up front.

Typical line-up: Wiland – Andersson, Augustsson, Bjorck, Floren - Mobaeck, Ishizaki, A Svensson, Alexandersson - Keene, M Svensson.

Right man…Daniel Mobaeck

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MAGNUS HAGLUND

Had a modest career as a second-choice goalkeeper but, at only 34, he has shown tremendous maturity as a coach.

THE PLAYER ANDERS SVENSSON

Injury-prone World Cup veteran but still the best playmaker in the Swedish League.

FENERBAHCE

Get it right!

The pressure was on coach Zico to avoid another Champions League flop

Genuine quality...Kezman

DESPITE WRESTING the Turkish title back from fierce rivals Galatasaray last season, Fenerbahce made major changes over the summer. One of the main reasons was that the club were determined to avoid a repeat of last season's Champions League disappointment, when they lost to Dynamo Kyiv in the third qualifying round. This season, they faced Anderlecht at the same stage.

Coach Zico made some intriguing signings. The headlines were hogged by the arrival of his Brazilian compatriot Roberto Carlos on a free transfer from Real Madrid. The club signed another Brazilian, left-sided Wederson from Ankaraspor, as well as highly promising local youngsters Ihan Parlak and Yasin Cakmak, right-back Gokhan Gonol, midfielder Ali Bilgin and speedy England-born forward Colin Kazim-Richards from Sheffield United.

There were, however, major departures. Tuncay Sanli left to seek his Premiership fortune with Middlesbrough, while goalkeeper Rustu Recber joined Istanbul rivals Besiktas and captain Umit Ozat joined Bundesliga side Koln.

There is still genuine quality in the side, not least from the front pairing of Brazilian Alex and Serb Mateja Kezman. Though Alex is technically a playmaker, he plays much further forward, to the point of almost leading the line alongside Kezman. In midfield Ghanaian Stephen Appiah combines well with Brazil-born Mehmet Aurelio. The latter took Turkish nationality and has appeared for the national side.

Fenerbahce's weakness is that they tend to go to pieces when pressed.

ALEX ALMOST UP WITH KEZMAN

Zico is likely to go with 4-4-1-1, with Alex almost alongside Mateja Kezman. Although Brazilian Deivid normally plays as a striker, Zico prefers him in a wide-right role. Mehmet Aurelio minds the shop in midfield while Stephen Appiah supplies drive and guile. Alternative personnel are Deniz Baris as a defensive midfielder, Ali Bilgin or Colin Kazim-Richards on the right of attack and Wederson on the left.

Typical line-up: Volkan Demirel - Onder, Lugano, Edu, Roberto Carlos - Deivid, Mehmet Aurelio, Appiah, Ugur - Alex - Kezman.

Pushing on...Alex

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ZICO

Entering his second season at Fener, his first European coaching post after many years in Japan, which included leading the national team.

THE PLAYER ALEX

Brazilian playmaker and club captain who signed a new two-year contract this summer. A free-kick specialist.

Defensive addition...Chivu

INTERNAZIONALE

History boys

Inter finally have the squad to repeat their glories of the 1960s

FOR INTERNAZIONALE, the European Cup successes of the 1960s are a dim memory. However, last season's Italian league title success has given the club a glimpse of what might be possible on the European stage.

The Serie A triumph came on the back of great performances from key men such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Dejan Stankovic and Marco Materazzi, and brought coach Roberto Mancini more kudos.

The only blot on the club's copybook was the brawl that followed their Champions League defeat to Valencia in the last 16. Nicolas Burdisso, Maicon, Ivan Cordoba and Julio Cruz were hit with suspensions of between two and six matches, though these were reduced on appeal.

This summer, new signings have strengthened an already powerful squad. David Suazo, one of the most exciting strikers in Serie A with Cagliari, gets his chance with a leading side and becomes the first Honduran to play in the Champions League. Cristian Chivu, the Romanian central defender signed from Roma, was played at left-back in pre-season and could even be used as a midfield defensive screen. Chilean midfielder Luis Jimenez, late of Lazio, and Colombian defender Nelson Rivas, from River Plate, have increased the options.

It is unclear who Chivu will replace in central defence as Mancini can already call upon several notable reserves in Walter Samuel and Nicolas Burdisso. But the coach has shown he is capable of improvisation, not least with the deployment of the ageing Luis Figo in a central midfield role, where his vision is more important than his pace, which is declining.

ONE FORMATION, MULTIPLE OPTIONS

Roberto Mancini favours a 4-4-2. Patrick Vieira is a guaranteed starter in midfield, with Dejan Stankovic, Esteban Cambiasso, Olivier Dacourt, Luis Figo, Santiago Solari and new signing Luis Jimenez in contention for the other places. In attack, Zlatan Ibrahimovic is likely to be teamed with new boy David Suazo rather than out-of-form Adriano, with Julio Cruz a more direct option.

Typical line-up: Julio Cesar - Maxwell, Materazzi, Cordoba, Maicon - Vieira, Dacourt, Stankovic, Figo - Ibrahimovic, Suazo.

Attacking opportunity...Suazo

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ROBERTO MANCINI

The former Sampdoria and Lazio forward has succeeded at Inter where many others have failed. Had the full support of club president Massimo Moratti even before last season's title win.

THE PLAYER ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

The Swedish attacker has won the league title in each of the past four seasons with three different clubs – Ajax, Juventus (twice, both later revoked) and Inter. Frustrating and brilliant in equal measure, but always worth watching.

LAZIO

Back in business

The club returned to the European big stage after suffering financial turmoil

Challenge…Tommaso Rocchi and co

LONG GONE ARE the big-spending days of the late 1990s, when Sven Goran Eriksson and the Cragnotti family splashed out record fees in pursuit of the Italian league title and success in European competition. Financial meltdown at the Cragnotti family business forced the departure of a host of big-name players, including Alessandro Nesta, and the end of Lazio's dream.

But, under new owner Claudio Lotito (who has kept wages as low as possible), Lazio made it back into the Champions League after finishing third in Serie A last term. Coach Delio Rossi has built a competitive side who hussle and harry their way through every minute of every game.

This summer, the retirement of veteran keeper Angelo Peruzzi broke one of the last links with the Cragnotti era. Peruzzi's replacement, Argentinian Juan Pablo Carizzo, from River Plate, is one of a number of signings designed to shore up the squad as they sought to return to the Champions League group stage via a third qualifying round tie against Dinamo Bucharest.

Also signed were French-Algerian Mourad Meghni, the talented midfielder who has been saddled with the "Little Zidane" tag from an early age; Argentinian right-back Lionel Scaloni; striker Simone Del Nero; and Serbian Under-21 left-back Aleksandar Kolarov, who may make an earlier-than-expected debut after an injury to Sebastiano Siviglia forced captain Luciano Zauri to move inside to centre-back.

The new signings will boost Lazio's chances in the domestic league, but they may not be enough to mount a serious challenge in Europe.

COMPACT AND COMPETITIVE

Delio Rossi's sides usually have a compact 4-4-2 formation that gives the opposition little time to settle. Gaby Mudingayi and Massimo Mutarelli are the hard workers in midfield, allowing Cristian Ledesma and the highly rated Mourad Meghni to take up creative duties. Goran Pandev and Tommaso Rocchi are the first-choice strikers.

Typical line-up: Carizzo – Scaloni, Siviglia, Cribari, Zauri – Mudingayi, Ledesma, Mutarelli, Meghni – Pandev, Rocchi.

Hard worker…Mutarelli

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH DELIO ROSSI

Only a modest player who never made it out of Serie B, but an exceptional coach. Led Foggia, Salernitana, Lecce and Atalanta before taking charge of Lazio in 2005.

THE PLAYER CRISTIAN LEDESMA

Midfielder who was with coach Rossi at Lecce and who typifies his industrious approach to the game. Has been linked with Juventus but has insisted he wants to stay at Lazio.

LIVERPOOL

Mind the gap

Last season's Champions League runners-up still lag behind in England

Record signing…Fernando Torres

LIVERPOOL FINISHED well short of Manchester United and Chelsea in the Premier League last season, yet still reached the Champions League Final. In a bid to redress the gap between success in Europe and stagnation in England, Liverpool's new owners – George Gillett and Tom Hicks – sanctioned record spending in the transfer market.

In came Spanish forward Fernando Torres, for a club record £22million, from Atletico Madrid, Dutch forward Ryan Babel (£11.5m, Ajax), Israeli midfielder Yossi Benayoun (£5m, West Ham) and Ukrainian forward Andrii Voronin (free, Bayer Leverkusen). Although Liverpool offloaded Craig Bellamy (West Ham), Djibril Cisse (Marseille) and Luis Garcia (Atletico Madrid), for £16m in total, their ambition is clear.

A decent challenge for the Premier League title is the priority for Gillett and Hicks. But, in fact, because the new signings from abroad may take time to acclimatise to English football, another assault on the Champions League might be a more realistic target, assuming, of course, that Liverpool got through their third qualifying round tie against Toulouse.

Liverpool certainly have the strength in depth to challenge on both fronts. In addition to high-profile arrivals Torres and Babel, manager Rafa Benitez has been quietly supervising a revolution in Liverpool's reserves. Youngsters from around the world have been signed up, including Brazilian midfielder Lucas Leiva and Hungarian forward Krisztian Nemeth.

The rising stars are likely to emerge this season, but it will be a gradual process. Either way, a team full of Jamie Carraghers is unlikely now or in the foreseeable future.

WHO WILL BE FIRST-CHOICE FORWARDS?

Rafa Benitez has plenty of striking options, but who will be the first-choices? Dirk Kuijt and new signing Andrii Voronin could see as much action as Fernando Torres and Peter Crouch. Another question is, where does Steven Gerrard play? The captain likes a central midfield role but Benitez prefers him on the right. New boys Yossi Benayoun and Ryan Babel can play wide or in attack.

Typical line-up: Reina – Finnan, Carragher, Agger, Riise – Gerrard, Xabi Alonso, Mascherano, Babel – Fernando Torres, Crouch.

Action stations…Voronin

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER RAFA BENITEZ

The Spaniard's stock is at a high after steering Liverpool to their second Champions League Final in three seasons. Has a reputation for tinkering with the team, but the results speak for themselves.

THE PLAYER STEVEN GERRARD

A rare thing in modern football: a local hero and national celebrity. The Liverpool captain resisted a move to Chelsea two summers ago and has matured into an eloquent leader at Anfield.

LYON

Trouble at the top

The French champions have so far been unable to transfer their domestic dominance to the European stage

Kicking off...Fred (left) and Chivu

AFTER CELEBRATING a sixth successive French league title, Lyon could be expected to be more confident than ever of finally making a breakthrough in the Champions League. But this summer they had further unsettling changes, both on the coaching and playing fronts.

Gerard Houllier, who had presided over two league title victories, left for a "sabbatical" after falling out with club top brass, notably Bernard Lacombe, the right-hand man of president Jean-Michel Aulas. The new coach is Alain Perrin, who steered Sochaux to last season's French Cup and a creditable seventh-place finish in the League.

Three French internationals also headed out of the club: Florent Malouda (to Chelsea), Eric Abidal (Barcelona) and Alou Diarra (Bordeaux). Lyon have made a habit of cashing in on their most valuable assets in recent seasons, most notably Michael Essien to Chelsea in 2005.

These seasonal changes have not halted Lyon's domination of the domestic league but they have struggled to transfer that success into the knockout stages of the Champions League. In 2005-06, Houllier's cautious tactics allowed Milan to snatch a late victory in the quarter-finals; last season Roma took advantage of Lyon's misfiring attack to knock them out at the last-16 stage.

Striker Fred was punished by UEFA for elbowing Roma's Cristian Chivu in that tie and will miss the first three matches of this season's group stage. He has a broken foot anyway, so new Ivorian striker Kader Keita will see plenty of action. First-choice keeper Gregory Coupet and defender Cris have also suffered long-term injuries.

NEW COACH, NEW SYSTEM

Alain Perrin seems to feel the 4-3-3 used by his predecessors has become too predictable. The new man has invariably used 4-4-2 with his other clubs, with two holding players and two wide midfielders. New midfield signing Mathieu Bodmer and keeper Remy Vercoutre have been covering for the injured Cris in defence and Gregory Coupet respectively.

Typical line-up: Vercoutre – Reveillere, Squillaci, Bodmer, Grosso – Toulalan, Kallstrom, Govou, Juninho – Keita, Benzema.

Cover...Bodmer

One for the future...Nani

ACCORDING TO Alex Ferguson, "winning the 2007 [Premier League] title has to be the club's greatest achievement" – greater even than the 1999 treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup.

The manager can rightly claim to be the true "special one" after his side reclaimed the domestic title four years after their last. England's best-supported club had seen their position threatened by the new wealth of Chelsea but they responded in swashbuckling style, with Cristiano Ronaldo the outstanding player of the English season.

The Glazer family may have hiked ticket prices at Old Trafford but they also made money available for major investments, in Owen Hargreaves, Nani, Anderson and, controversially, Carlos Tevez. The buys represented a good mix of established stars (Hargreaves, Tevez), who can slot into the current starting XI, and youngsters (Nani, Anderson), who will be the long-term replacements for Ryan Giggs and Paul Scholes.

The new arrivals will help United avoid a repeat of last season, when playing resources were stretched to the limit as the club competed on three fronts in the final stretch.

While reaching the Champions League semi-finals last term was their best result in the competition since that 1999 triumph, the problem of the different playing styles needed to succeed domestically and in Europe continues to be the biggest that faces Ferguson. United's whirlwind attacking approach worked wonders in the Champions League quarter-final annihilation of Roma. But they were outplayed by Milan in the semis, when their defensive shortcomings were brutally exposed.

ROONEY AND TEVEZ: TWO PEAS IN A POD?

Alex Ferguson may have to swap last season's 4-3-3 for a 4-4-2 to accommodate new signing Carlos Tevez alongside Wayne Rooney – once the latter has recovered from his foot injury. The big question is whether the duo can play together, as both like to drop deep. Either may work better with the more direct Louis Saha or Dong Fangzhou. Michael Carrick will push hard for a midfield berth.

Typical line-up: Van der Sar – Neville, Ferdinand, Vidic, Heinze – C Ronaldo, Hargreaves, Scholes, Giggs – Tevez, Rooney.

Doubling up?...Rooney

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ALAIN PERRIN

The former Marseille boss revived his reputation with Sochaux after flopping at Portsmouth. But how will his disciplinarian approach go down with Lyon's big names?

THE PLAYER JUNINHO PERNAMBUCANO

Lyon's star for three seasons, but injury prevented him from familiarising himself with the new 4-4-2 system in pre-season. Could his days as an untouchable be numbered?

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER ALEX FERGUSON

The 65-year-old, who is now on a one-year rolling contract, is more influential than ever. But a second Champions League triumph would surely prompt him to bow out at the end of the season.

THE PLAYER CRISTIANO RONALDO

United's most important player by a mile. On the pitch, the Portuguese's dazzling displays have won a new legion of admirers. Off it, he has replaced David Beckham as the club's most marketable asset.

MARSEILLE

Return ticket

The club are back in the big time after finding their attacking feet under coach Albert Emon

Ribery replacement…Ziani

MARSEILLE, THE PERENNIAL under-achievers of the French League, are finally celebrating success after qualifying for Europe's elite club competition. Last season's runners-up finish to Lyon was their best position since 1998-99, when they also were second, and it booked them a Champions League appearance for the first time for four seasons.

In that campaign, 2003-04, Marseille failed to get out of a group that also included Real Madrid and eventual winners Porto. However, having dropped into the UEFA Cup, they reached the Final, losing to Parma.

Defender Habib Beye is the only player who survives from that match in Gothenburg, and the wholesale changes in playing staff have continued this summer. Franck Ribery left for Bayern Munich, while the signings include Karim Ziani from Sochaux – as Ribery's replacement – Bolo Zenden (Liverpool) and the combative Benoit Cheyrou (Auxerre).

But coach Albert Emon has seen off any threat to his position. A member of the coaching staff since 2000, he has demonstrated a gift for attacking tactics that have surprised many. He is building a squad that is now well placed to challenge Lyon for the French title, though Europe is likely to be much tougher territory.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO CISSE

Despite fielding only one front-runner, Albert Emon by no means employs a safety-first system, with striker Djibril Cisse receiving ample support from midfield. Lots of long balls are played for him to run on to, with gifted young playmaker Samir Nasri the chief source of supply. Should Emon go for two up front, Senegalese Mamadou Niang will come in.

Typical line-up: Carrasso - Beye, Givet, Rodriguez, Taiwo - Cana, Cheyrou - Ziani, Nasri, Zenden - Cisse.

Well-supplied…Cisse

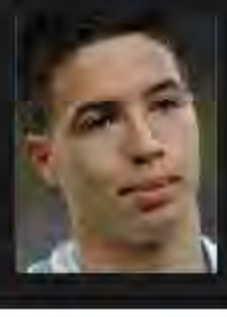
THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ALBERT EMON

Former Marseille forward who had three spells as caretaker coach before being offered the job permanently last summer. Solid and dependable but has also shown that he can be a tactical innovator.

THE PLAYER SAMIR NASRI

The rising star of French football whose Algerian roots have inevitably drawn comparisons with Marseille-born Zinedine Zidane. Nasri's performances have given Marseille fans, upset at Franck Ribery's departure, a new hero.



MILAN

Keeping steady

The defending European champions feel there is little need for change judging by their lack of action in the transfer market

Victory parade…Milan win in Athens

THE REIGNING EUROPEAN champions appear to be resting on their laurels. Only one signing of note had been made as we went to press – Brazilian kid Alexandre Pato – and he will not be eligible to play until he turns 18 in January.

The retirement of veteran defender Alessandro Costacurta after the Champions League Final triumph in Athens and the likely displacement of Paolo Maldini by Georgian Kakha Kaladze has helped ease the problem of Milan's ageing defence, though if the team get anywhere near the Final this time round, Maldini will be desperate for the chance to equal Paco Gento's record of six European Cup victories.

The biggest concern has been the situation of striker Alberto Gilardino, who was left out of the starting line-up in Athens in favour of veteran poacher Filippo Inzaghi. Coach Carlo Ancelotti has not been entirely convinced by Gilardino's performances and may yet sign another partner for Ronaldo, who will be competing in Milan colours in the Champions League for the first time because he was cup-tied last term following his mid-season move from Real Madrid.

Milan finished only fourth in Serie A last season, way behind Inter, even when their eight-point *Calciopoli* punishment is taken into account. But they remain serious candidates in the Champions League.

KAKA IS THE KEY

Milan normally line up in a 4-3-1-2 formation, with Kaka the key figure behind the strikers. Andrea Pirlo plays the deep-lying midfield pivot role, with Clarence Seedorf and Gennaro Gattuso making up the midfield. Kaka can play further forward in a 4-4-1-1 set-up, allowing Massimo Ambrosini, Yoann Gourcuff or Serginho to come into midfield.

Typical line-up: Dida - Oddo, Nesta, Kaladze, Jankulovski - Seedorf, Pirlo, Gattuso - Kaka - Gilardino, Ronaldo.

In the hole…Kaka

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH CARLO ANCELOTTI

The stock of the former international midfielder is higher than ever after he led Milan to a seventh European Cup victory in Athens.

THE PLAYER KAKA

The outstanding player of the past year in world club football and he should be refreshed after an extended summer break, having opted out of the Copa America. The Brazilian has been linked with Real Madrid but insists he will stay with Milan.

OLYMPIAKOS

Change for good?

The new-look Greek champions are determined to find success in Europe, too

Occasional sorties...Djordjevic

THERE WERE major changes at Olympiakos this summer, despite the club celebrating their 10th league title in 11 seasons. Out went Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo, after a row about pay, and Mexican attacking midfielder Nery Castillo. In came a host of new names, enabling coach Takis Lemonis to pick virtually an entirely new first team.

Olympiakos collected £13.5million from the sale of Castillo to Shakhtar Donetsk, and much of the money has been used to bolster a squad that has struggled to transfer their domestic dominance to the European stage. Last season, Olympiakos finished bottom of their Champions League group, with no wins, behind Valencia, Roma and Shakhtar. Coach Trond Sollied was sacked, to be replaced by Lemonis, the club's 31st boss since 1979.

The new arrivals include a trio of Argentinians – striker Leonel Nunez and midfielders Cristian Ledesma and Luciano Galletti – Spanish defender Raul Bravo, veteran Serbian striker Darko Kovacevic, DR Congo forward Lomana Lua Lua and Greek international centre-back Paraskevas Antzas.

Despite the signings, a major concern is that, aside from the occasional sortie inside from captain Predrag Djordjevic, Olympiakos lack creativity in central areas.

PENETRATION FROM THE FLANKS

Takis Lemonis prefers a solid 4-4-2 in which the vast bulk of the attacking penetration comes from the flanks, from wide attacking midfielders Luciano Galletti and Predrag Djordjevic and adventurous right-back Vasilis Torosidis. An alternative is a 4-3-3, in which striker Darko Kovacevic is added to the mix and one of the defensive midfielders sacrificed. Croat keeper Tomislav Butina will push Antonis Nikopolidis hard for the starting spot.

Typical line-up: Nikopolidis - Torosidis, Antzas, Cesar, Raul Bravo - Galletti, Stoltidis, Ledesma, Djordjevic - Lua Lua, Nunez.

Pushed hard...Nikopolidis

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH TAKIS LEMONIS

Former Olympiakos player who is back for his second spell in charge. Criticised for his role in the summer departure of Rivaldo.

THE PLAYER PREDRAG DJORDJEVIC

The Serbian wideman has been at the club for 11 years and was recently rewarded with a new contract.

PORTO

Time to tango

There is a growing Argentinian influence at the Portuguese champions

Contenders...Pedro Emanuel and co

DON'T BE SURPRISED if Porto play to the rhythm of the tango this season as at least four Argentinians are expected to be part of the starting XI. Mariano Gonzalez and Ernesto Farias are new arrivals, while Lucho Gonzalez and Lisandro Lopez have already proven their worth at the Dragao stadium. Mario Bollati, bought from Racing Club, could also have a part to play.

Porto lost Anderson to Manchester United and Pepe to Real Madrid over the summer and their defence lacks pace, but they should still be good enough to make the Champions League knockout stages.

Key man will again be Ricardo Quaresma. Last season it seemed that the only plan coach Jesualdo Ferreira had was to get the ball to the star winger and let him do his thing. Lopez's goals will also be crucial, as will strong performances from Lucho Gonzalez, the link between defence and attack and seen as Porto's Frank Lampard, and goalkeeper Helton, who recently broke into the Brazilian national squad.

It was Helton's mistake at Chelsea last season that cost Porto a place in the quarter-finals. This season, with the new additions, they are eyeing a later stage. Ferreira says: "Every time Porto play abroad they have a history to honour, and we must continue to do our best in European competition in order to live up to the victories we have achieved in the past."

GIVE THE BALL TO QUARESMA!

Porto seemed over-dependent on Ricardo Quaresma last season but he now has an opposite number on the left flank, Mariano Gonzalez, who is also fast, skilful and delivers deadly crosses. Benni McCarthy was missed up front last season. New recruit Ernesto Farias could add a killer instinct in front of goal.

Typical line-up: Helton - Bosingwa, Joao Paulo, Bruno Alves, Cech - Quaresma, L Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, M Gonzalez - Lopez, Farias.

The go-to man...Quaresma

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH JESUALDO FERREIRA

The former Braga boss has been criticised for his cautious approach but has managed to build a solid side who still score plenty of goals, at home and abroad.

THE PLAYER RICARDO QUARESMA

The Harry Potter of football will look to weave his magic for what could be his last season with Porto. His dribbling skills and assists could make the difference between success and failure in Europe.

PSV EINDHOVEN

Plus side

Cocu and Alex have gone but coach Koeman believes the close-season buys have improved PSV

New face…Danko Lazovic

DUTCH CHAMPIONS PSV Eindhoven lost two key players over the summer in veteran midfielder and Dutch international Phillip Cocu, who retired, and Brazilian international defender Alex, who finally made the switch to Chelsea after months of speculation. And there were a raft of other departures – Michael Reiziger, Patrick Kluivert (both released), Michael Lamey (Duisburg), Sun Xiang (Shanghai Shenhua), Diego Tardelli (Sao Paulo) and Oscar Moens (retired).

With that in mind, coach Ronald Koeman could easily have been forgiven for treating 2007-08 as a transitional season. Instead, he believes his squad have been improved by the summer comings and goings. "Up front we are stronger," he said. "This team is so talented it should be able to dictate the game."

Much is expected of the attacking-third additions – Danko Lazovic (Vitesse) and Kenneth Perez (Ajax) – while PSV and scout Piet De Visser were again extremely busy in the South American market, signing Brazilians Fagner, Jonathan Reis and Cassio Ramos. As part of the deal for Alex, Chelsea have agreed to loan PSV Serbian Under-21 defender Slobodan Rajkovic, who has been on loan at his original club, OFK Belgrade. Along with Alcides and Eric Addo, Rajkovic will provide cover for first-choice centre-backs Manuel Da Costa and Carlos Salcido. Midfield dynamo Timmy Simons will take over Cocu's role.

Tommie Van der Leegte (signed from Wolfsburg) could play as a controlling midfielder, while Mike Zonneveld (NAC) will slot in at left-back.

SIMONS IS MIDFIELD CORNERSTONE

PSV play 4-4-2 but, against lesser opposition, can switch to 4-3-3. In midfield, only Timmy Simons is certain of his place. Kenneth Perez, Edison Mendez and Jason Culina could cover the flanks, while Ibrahim Afellay, Ismail Aissati and Otman Bakkal will contest the attacking midfield position. Up front, Arouna Kone and Jefferson Farfan face competition from Danko Lazovic.

Typical line-up: Gomes - Kromkamp, Da Costa, Salcido, Zonneveld - Simons, Mendez, Perez, Afellay - Farfan, Kone.

Sure thing…Timmy Simons

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH RONALD KOEMAN

The former international defender coached Ajax and Benfica before taking the PSV helm from Guus Hiddink last year. Twice a European Cup winner as a player, with PSV in 1988 and Barcelona in 1992.

THE PLAYER JEFFERSON FARFAN

Strong striker who can play up front alone as well as in the more usual pairing. Had seemed likely to go to the Spanish top flight over the summer.

Midfield fulcrum…Ferguson

WALTER SMITH is continuing with his plans to rebuild Rangers. With most of Paul Le Guen's underachieving signings having left in the wake of the French boss, there is a fresh look to the team as the former Scotland manager begins his first full season back at Ibrox.

The most noticeable difference will be in defence, an area that attracted a great deal of criticism last season. Frenchman Carlos Cuellar has been drafted in to play alongside either David Weir or Andy Webster in central defence.

In midfield, captain Barry Ferguson will continue to be the fulcrum, and will benefit from the return from injury of Kevin Thomson. Summer signing Lee McCulloch will be expected to give width and penetration, while another new arrival, United States international DaMarcus Beasley, is an extremely versatile attacking midfielder.

Up front, new French striker Jean-Claude Darcheville has already demonstrated his competitive nature, an attribute missing from the team during Le Guen's reign.

Rangers overcame Montenegro's Zeta 3-0 in the Champions League second qualifying round, leaving them with the obstacle of Red Star Belgrade to overcome to reach the group stage.

The priority for Smith and his players will be ending Celtic's domestic dominance, but a successful European run would not go amiss.

BOYD JOINED BY NEW BOY DARCHEVILLE

Walter Smith is expected to use a 4-4-2 formation, with new signing Jean-Claude Darcheville and Kris Boyd likely to be the first-choice forward pairing. DaMarcus Beasley will usually be used on the right of midfield, where Nacho Novo provides competition, but can be played further forward if preferred. Lee McCulloch should provide much-needed width on the left.

Typical line-up: McGregor - Hutton, Cuellar, Weir, Papac - Beasley, Ferguson, Thomson, McCulloch - Darcheville, Boyd.

Straight in…Darcheville

THE MAIN MEN

THE MANAGER WALTER SMITH

Quit as Scotland manager mid-way through last season to return to Rangers, where he was so successful in the 1990s.

THE PLAYER BARRY FERGUSON

The long-serving captain will again be pulling the strings in a revamped midfield.

REAL MADRID

Door to No 10

The Spanish champions are eyeing yet another European Cup triumph

Going Dutch...Sneijder is on board

REAL MADRID'S championship triumph in June ended their worst trophy drought for more than half a century and has allowed the club to focus on winning a record 10th European Cup. But whether they can come close to that target is debatable; in the past two seasons, Madrid have failed to make it past the first knockout round.

The team of 2007-08 promises to be very different to last season. In the summer, the last of the galacticos left, Roberto Carlos joining Fenerbahce and David Beckham embarking on his much-hyped move to Major League Soccer.

Initial signings were inauspicious: more centre-backs – Pepe from Porto and Christoph Metzelder from Borussia Dortmund – and a forward, Javier Saviola, released by eternal rivals Barcelona. Madrid have since taken a leaf out of Barca's book by going Dutch. Ajax midfielder Wesley Sneijder and Feyenoord full-back Royston Drenthe joined Ruud Van Nistelrooy, and Madrid were looking to give the line-up an even more *Oranje* tinge as they sought to sign Arjen Robben.

New coach Bernd Schuster is under considerable pressure to deliver a more attacking brand of football than his predecessor, Fabio Capello. The early signs were not good. Schuster tried numerous tactical options in pre-season friendlies, a number of which were lost, and Madrid were thrashed 6-3 on aggregate by Sevilla in the Spanish Super Cup.

DIARRA HOLDS THE FORT

Bernd Schuster's most likely formation is 4-1-3-2, with Mahamadou Diarra as the defensive midfielder (Fernando Gago is the alternative) and three attacking midfielders behind Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Raul. Javier Saviola and Roberto Soldado are attacking options, while Christoph Metzelder provides central defensive back-up. A more defensive alternative is 4-2-3-1, with Raul dropping out and Guti or Gago joining Diarra in midfield.

Typical line-up: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Cannavaro, Pepe, Drenthe - Diarra - Higuain, Sneijder, Robinho - Raul, Van Nistelrooy.

Goal threat...Van Nistelrooy

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH BERND SCHUSTER

Former German international and one of the few players to have made the switch from Barcelona to Madrid. Impressed at Getafe last season.

THE PLAYER RUUD VAN NISTELROOY

Madrid's leading goalscorer last season and their best outfield player by some distance. Without him, Madrid are a very ordinary team.

Helmsman...Kosanovic

RED STAR BELGRADE

Heads keep rolling

The Serbian champions are on to their fifth coach in two years

RED STAR BELGRADE'S preparations for the new season were thrown into chaos by yet another change of coach. Bosko Djurovski was sacked after the Serbian champions just scraped past Levadia Tallinn of Estonia in the Champions League second qualifying round. His replacement, Milorad Kosanovic, the former Serbian Under-21 and Maltese national coach, is Red Star's fifth coach since July 2005.

The club are also suffering a style problem. They may have won the Double last season, but the fans often say that they can barely remember the last time they enjoyed a performance by their team.

Red Star always have the same high ambitions: to win the domestic league and then qualify for the Champions League group stage. They did not manage the latter feat in their four previous attempts (losing to Dynamo Kyiv, Bayer Leverkusen, PSV Eindhoven and Milan in the qualifying rounds). Rangers stood in their way this time round. Despite having a modest annual budget of around £7million, the squad was rebuilt over the summer. There were several foreign arrivals, including Polish defender Grzegorz Bronowicki (Legia Warsaw), Portuguese midfielder Lucas (Boavista), Argentinian forward Hernan Barcos (Olmedo of Ecuador), Ecuadorean midfielder Franklin Salas (LDU Quito) and Colombian midfielder Mauricio Molina (Olimpia of Paraguay). In addition, striker Filip Djordjevic returned from a loan spell at Rad Belgrade.

The departees were Milan Purovic (to Sporting Lisbon), Dusan Djokic (Club Brugge) and Nebojsa Joksimovic (Neuchatel Xamax).

ATTACKING OPTIONS DECIDEDLY LACKING

Red Star play with a 4-2-3-1 formation, either with Hernan Barcos or youngster Filip Djordjevic as centre-forward, and Ognjen Koroman and Mauricio Molina as attacking wide players. The holding midfielders – Lucas and Segundo Castillo – are both key players, but a lack of attacking options could prove Red Star's undoing.

Typical line-up: Randjelovic - Basta, Tutoric, Gueye, Andjelkovic - Lucas, Castillo - Koroman, Milovanovic, Molina - Barcos.

Heart of defence...Gueye

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MILORAD KOSANOVIC

Now in his second stint at Red Star after two and a half years without a coaching job.

THE PLAYER OGNJEN KOROMAN

Much-travelled Serbian international who joined Red Star last winter and instantly proved his class as an attacking wide midfielder.

ROMA

Forward thinking

Attack has been the best form of defence for Luciano Spalletti's side

New option...Giuly

ROMA QUALIFIED automatically for the Champions League group stage after finishing runners-up in Serie A to Internazionale, who they then beat in the Italian Cup Final. But despite the successes, the memory of being destroyed by Manchester United in last term's Champions League quarter-finals is still painful. "Every shot finished in the back of the net," Roma coach Luciano Spalletti complained after the 7-1 second leg defeat at Old Trafford. "What would I change if I could do it again? Stay at home."

A week earlier Spalletti had seen his side win the first leg 2-1 in Rome, as the coach's favoured attacking approach looked as if it would continue to give the Italians the edge.

Crucial to Roma's attacking ambitions has been the deployment of club talisman Francesco Totti in the unlikely role of target man. His movement, often dropping deep from the centre-forward position, has freed up space for wide attackers Rodrigo Taddei and Mancini.

Summer signings have given Roma more options in the attacking department – French attacking midfielder Ludovic Giuly arrived from Barcelona and striker Mauro Esposito from Cagliari. Esposito offers Spalletti an alternative for the lone striker role in his favoured 4-2-3-1 formation, while Giuly could be an alternative to any of the attacking midfield trio.

The loss of Romanian defender Cristian Chivu to Inter is a worry. Spalletti was philosophical about it, saying: "We tried, but it was difficult to hold on to him. But a good team can't rely on just one player." Certainly, Brazilian international Juan, signed from Bayer Leverkusen, looks a promising replacement.

TOTTI IS CENTRE OF ATTENTION

In Luciano Spalletti's 4-2-3-1 system, Francesco Totti operates as a lone striker who often drops deep, leaving nobody leading the line. Rodrigo Taddei and Mancini are the wide attackers playing either side of Daniele De Rossi, with David Pizarro and Simone Perrotta the deeper midfield duo. In defence, new boy Juan slots in alongside Philippe Mexes.

Typical line-up: Doni – Panucci, Mexes, Juan, Tonetto – Pizarro, Perrotta – Taddei, De Rossi, Mancini – Totti.

Dropping deep...Totti

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH LUCIANO SPALLETTI

The shaven-headed boss steered unfancied Udinese into the Champions League qualifiers but joined Roma in summer 2005, before the ties were played. Has turned Roma around with his brand of attacking football.

THE PLAYER FRANCESCO TOTTI

The winner of last season's Golden Shoe as Europe's leading goalscorer after a switch to a more forward role with Roma. Recently confirmed his international retirement after winning 59 caps.

ROSENBORG

Rightful place?

The Trondheim club have reorganised and rebuilt after losing the domestic crown in 2005

Important contribution...Sapara

ROSENBORG were back in contention for a place at Europe's top table after winning back the Norwegian league title they surrendered to Valerenga in 2005. The Trondheim club had won the championship 13 times running before that.

Rosenborg faced a journey into the unknown in the Champions League second qualifying round, against Kazakh side Astana, but came through it comfortably, 10-2 on aggregate. That set up a Scandinavian derby against Finland's Tampere United.

A lot has changed at Rosenborg in the past two seasons; indeed, veteran midfielder Roar Strand, who has won 14 league titles with the club, is one of the few constants.

For a start, there are far more foreign players, and Canadian Lars Hirschfeld, Finn Mika Koppinen, Swede Michael Dorsin, Slovak Marek Sapara and Ivorian Yssouf Kone all play important roles.

Of the important Norwegian players, Alexander Tettey and Per Ciljan Skjelbred have come through the club ranks, while Steffen Iversen returned home after years in England. However, Daniel Braaten left for Bolton this summer.

Rosenborg are trailing Brann in the domestic league this season and seem too far behind to have a chance of retaining the title. Yet everyone at the club has come to expect success in Europe after so many years of competing in the Champions League group stage.

TRIED AND TRUSTED 4-3-3

Rosenborg will stick to their 4-3-3 system that has proved so successful down the years. Key ingredients are the attack-minded full-backs – Roar Strand and Michael Dorsin – and the surging runs from central defender Mika Koppinen. Central midfielder Alexander Tettey is the main supply route to Steffen Iversen and Abdoulrazak Traore on the flanks. Ivorian Yssouf Kone seems to have solved the goalscoring problem.

Typical line-up: Hirschfeld - Strand, Basma, Koppinen, Dorsin - Tettey, Sapara, Riseth - Iversen, Kone, Traore.

Flanking...Iversen

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH KNUT TORUM

Former assistant who took over from Per Hogmo last season and steered the club to the league title.

THE PLAYER MAREK SAPARA

The Slovak has the knack of scoring from long range and covers a lot of ground in his midfield role.

SALZBURG

Trap's challenge

The veteran coach is under pressure to deliver

Bullish...Ilic

DIETRICH MATESCHITZ has big plans for Salzburg. The tycoon, who made his money from the Red Bull energy drink, has invested millions to turn the lowly club into Austria's No 1. Last season, they won their first league title in a decade by a huge margin, 19 points, under veteran coach Giovanni Trapattoni.

This season, the Austrian billionaire expected the Italian to move the club from domestic supremacy to European class and qualify for the Champions League group stage. Shakhtar Donetsk stood in their way, in the third qualifying round.

New arrivals were headed by Serbian playmaker Sasa Ilic, who signed from Galatasaray. He joined a list of foreign stars, including Croatian defender Niko Kovac, Japanese international full-back Alex, Argentinian midfielder Ezequiel Carboni and Swiss midfielder Johan Vonlanthen. Indeed, the only Austrian player likely to make the starting XI is full-back Markus Steinhofer.

The foreign legion is spearheaded by Alexander Zickler, the former German international who has scored 31 goals in two seasons since joining from Bayern Munich.

This season, Trapattoni will be working without former Germany captain Lothar Matthaus, who was sacked as the Italian's right-hand man after the domestic title success. The pair had had a difficult relationship.

BIG CHOICES UP FRONT

Salzburg are the team to beat in the domestic league. They usually dominate opponents, even in away games, and continually have to face walls of players defending their goal. Strikers Alexander Zickler (the first choice), Vratislav Lokvenc and Marc Janko are all tall and offer an aerial threat, making a good supply of crosses crucial.

Typical line-up: Ochs - Steinhofer, Vargas, Sekagya, Alex - Vonlanthen, Carboni, Kovac, Jezek - Ilic - Zickler.

Aerial threat...Zickler

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH GIOVANNI TRAPATTONI

Football's most successful coach. After years with some of the world's biggest clubs in Italy, Germany and Portugal, he decided to take on the Salzburg challenge – to try to lead them to European heights.

THE PLAYER ALEXANDER ZICKLER

The veteran German striker is still lightning quick and the team's best hope for goals.

SARAJEVO

Believe it or not

Bosnia's top team caused a major surprise in the Champions League qualifying rounds

Big shock...Sarajevo (dark) beat Genk

SARAJEVO, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, is still recovering from the civil war of the early 1990s. Now the city's leading football club have given the residents something to be proud of.

The emphatic 9-1 aggregate victory over Maltese champions Marsaxlokk in the Champions League first qualifying round suggested Sarajevo might be capable of something special. And they produced it in the next round, beating Genk of Belgium on away goals after a 2-2 aggregate draw. It was a huge achievement for the club, whose annual budget is a tiny fraction of most teams in the competition.

Not only that, but also they had lost their best player, Brazilian Marciano, over the summer, while midfielder Faruk Ihtijarevic and forward Emir Obuca left after the Marsaxlokk tie. But the budget stretched to buy striker Admir Rascic (from Bela Krajina of Slovenia) and midfielders Marko Maksimovic (Pula of Croatia) and Alen Basic (Dinamo Dresden), and all the new men played their part in the qualifying round victories.

However, the star of the show was playmaker Vladan Grujic, the first Serb to play for the Bosnian national side. His ability to pick out Rascic, the lone striker, will be crucial in the rest of the European campaign, the next step of which was a final qualifier against Dynamo Kyiv.

Sarajevo lack attacking ambition, but their biggest problem could be the tendency for coach Husref Musemic, once briefly on the books of Hearts, to fall out with his players.

NINE MEN BEHIND THE BALL

In the domestic league, Sarajevo usually play a 4-4-2 formation, but in Europe they will have a more defensive outlook, with a counter-attacking five-man midfield. Admir Rascic is the lone striker, with the experienced Almir Turkovic playing in behind him. Generally, defence is key, with eight or nine players behind the ball at any time. In midfield, Vladan Grujic and Alen Basic are the key figures.

Typical line-up: Alaim - Babic, Muharemovic, Milosevic, Saraba - Maksimovic, Basic, Grujic, Hadzic - Turkovic - Rascic.

Experience...Turkovic

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH HUSREF MUSEMIC

Excellent tactician but constantly falls out with the players and club directors.

THE PLAYER VLADAN GRUJIC

The international pulls the strings in Sarajevo's midfield, directing the team's play from a deep position.

SCHALKE

Progress report

Coach Slomka led the club to the brink of the Bundesliga title last term but summer changes caused tension

Teen star…Rakitic (left)

SCHALKE MAY HAVE seen a first Bundesliga title snatched from the jaws of victory in the final days of last season, confirming their reputation as chokers, but their progress over the past 18 months under Mirko Slomka has been considerable.

Last summer, the inexperienced coach was favourite to be the first Bundesliga boss to be sacked, and his relaxed attitude with the players has been criticised. But he nevertheless steered Schalke to the brink of the title, before defeat by Borussia Dortmund in the penultimate round effectively handed the prize to Stuttgart.

Slomka also showed his hard side, dropping veteran keeper Frank Rost and introducing youngster Manuel Neuer. And this summer Brazilian playmaker Lincoln was allowed to leave for Galatasaray, to be replaced by teenage Croat-Swiss midfielder Ivan Rakitic.

The departure of Lincoln, and Hamit Altintop to Bayern Munich, drew criticism from striker Kevin Kuranyi. "The young players are good, but the mix is just not right," said the German international. Club president Josef Schnusenberg responded: "We have not lost any world-class players. Lincoln showed his class just six times in the year, and Hamit played well only in the last third of the season, having done nothing for the previous three and a half years."

Club revenues are set to increase with Champions League participation and a £16million-a-year sponsorship deal with Russian company Gazprom. In the meantime, though, much of the attacking burden will fall on Kuranyi, who will be their central striker whatever the formation.

4-3-3 FOR STARTERS

Mirko Slomka favours 4-3-3, with a pair of midfield enforcers – Fabian Ernst and Levan Kobiashvili – Ivan Rakitic as the playmaker, pacy wide men in Gerald Asamoah and Peter Lovenkrands, and striker Kevin Kuranyi. They can switch to 4-4-2, with Kuranyi partnered by young Turk Halil Altintop. In Europe, Kuranyi may play alone up front.

Typical line-up: Neuer - Rafinha, Bordon, Krstajic, Pander - Ernst, Kobiashvili, Rakitic - Asamoah, Kuranyi, Lovenkrands.

Leading the line…Kuranyi

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MIRKO SLOMKA

One of the youngest coaches in the Bundesliga and a rising star. Moved to Schalke in 2004 as assistant to Ralf Rangnick, succeeding him as head coach in January 2006.

THE PLAYER KEVIN KURANYI

Schalke's top scorer last season with 15 goals, he will again be expected to shoulder the attacking burden. Has not been afraid to criticise the club for lacking ambition.

SEVILLA

To be continued...

The UEFA Cup holders look set for more success in Europe

On the up…win after win for Sevilla

THE SEVILLA success story continues. The Andalucian side made it into the Champions League for the first time after finishing third in La Liga last season – they faced a third qualifying round tie against AEK Athens – and they have won the UEFA Cup two years in a row.

The big story of the summer was the soap opera of full-back Daniel Alves and his impending departure. After finally being given permission to leave, and having agreed a hefty fee with Chelsea, the deal floundered when Roman Abramovich refused to countenance splashing out so much. At the time of writing Alves was still expected to leave, but other clubs were understood to have entered the bidding.

Without their best player of the past two years, Sevilla could now suffer, victims of their own success. Under coach Juande Ramos, and backed by the work of technical director Monchi, the team have punched above their weight. Their UEFA Cup triumphs and domestic league performances have alerted the whole of Europe to Sevilla's potential. Now, even without Alves, they have to deliver.

Summer signings followed the recent pattern of buying potential – Belgian winger Tom De Mul (Ajax), Malian midfielder Seydou Keita (Lens), Colombian defender Aquivaldo Mosquera (Mexico's Pachuca) – while Sevilla also took Dutch defender Khalid Boulahrouz on loan from Chelsea.

The dark cloud hanging over the club was Ramos's own situation. He is known to covet a job in the English Premiership, with Tottenham a leading suitor, and had not agreed a new contract with Sevilla's hard-bargaining president Jose Maria del Nido.

WIDE BOYS ARE THE KEY

Sevilla play fast and furious in an attacking 4-4-2 formation, with plenty of pressure from the wide men, Jesus Navas and Adriano. Javi Navarro will return to central defence when he recovers from injury, with Ivica Dragutinovic another, versatile option. Alexander Kerzhakov is likely to see action in attack.

Typical line-up: Palop - Hinkel, Boulahrouz, Escude, Puerta - Jesus Navas, Poulsen, Maresca, Adriano - Luis Fabiano, Kanoute.

Pressure game…Jesus Navas

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH JUANDE RAMOS

Has worked wonders in Andalucia but had yet to sign an extension to the contract that expires next summer, prompting speculation that he would move on.

THE PLAYER CHRISTIAN POULSEN

The Danish midfielder may not be the most glamorous of players but he is Sevilla's most important figure in terms of organisation.

SHAKHTAR DONETSK

Burning ambition

Big summer signings show the Ukrainians mean business

Central or wide...Fernandinho

SHAKHTAR DONETSK are ferociously ambitious, probably even more so after losing out in the Ukrainian League and Cup to arch-rivals Dynamo Kyiv last season.

In preparation for their European campaign, they again splashed the cash this summer, spending a club record £13.5million on Mexican international attacking midfielder Nery Castillo (from Olympiakos), a star of the Copa America, and £5.5m on much-travelled Italian international striker Cristiano Lucarelli (Livorno).

Lucarelli is likely to link up with one of Ukraine's most promising forwards, Olexander Gladkyy, who joined from FC Kharkiv earlier this year.

Other key players include Brazilian Fernandinho, who joined Shakhtar from Atletico Paranaense in 2005 for £5.2m. He has proved himself to be versatile, adept as a central midfielder or as a winger.

Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu was in confident mood ahead of the Champions League third qualifying round tie against Salzburg. "I think we've had a very fruitful time in the transfer market this summer and signed high-quality players. I'm sure we can play good, entertaining football and make serious progress in Europe."

CASTILLO TAKES FREE ROLE

Mircea Lucescu favours a 4-4-2 formation with a hard-working midfield, whose talent gives him plenty of tactical options. Volodymyr Priyomov plays the holding role, with Brazilian Fernandinho alongside him in the centre. Another Brazilian, Jadson, supports attack from the right while Nery Castillo plays a free role behind the two forwards, Olexander Gladkyy and Cristiano Lucarelli.

Typical line-up: Pyatov - Srna, Chygrynskyi, Kucher, Rat - Jadson, Fernandinho, Priyomov, Castillo - Gladkyy, Lucarelli.

Liberated...Castillo

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MIRCEA LUCESCU

Experienced boss who has won league titles in his native Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Was also in charge of Internazionale in 1999.

THE PLAYER NERY CASTILLO

The Mexican was in great form at the Copa America and it was a coup for Shakhtar to sign him from Olympiakos this summer.

SLAVIA PRAGUE

Smicer's pet

The former golden boy's return has boosted the Czech runners-up

Long-term injury...Svento

SLAVIA PRAGUE squeezed past Slovakian champions MSK Zilina in the Champions League second qualifying round, winning 4-3 on penalties after a goalless aggregate draw to set up a final qualifying tie against Ajax.

But coach Karel Jarolim was confident his side could make their mark in Europe this season. "Our competitiveness has definitely increased, mainly through the arrival of Vladimir Smicer. His signing will be positive in every way."

The Slavia squad undeniably has talent but meshing together a team of emerging talent, experienced veterans and the odd exotic import will be a challenge. Much is expected of Smicer – who is back at his hometown club after 11 years abroad – though the 34-year-old is notoriously fragile physically.

Other arrivals include central defender Erich Brabec, French midfielder Mickael Tavares – who promises to form a stylish midfield partnership with Smicer – and forwards Zdenek Senkerik and Milan Ivana. Slavia's squad also features two Under-20 World Cup finalists – the adaptable Marek Suchy and wide midfielder Petr Janda. Senkerik's arrival will relieve some of the pressure on tenacious striker Stanislav Vlcek, the team's main source of goals.

The biggest summer loss was midfielder Lukas Jarolim, the coach's son and captain last term, to Siena. In addition, skilful midfielder Dusan Svento, Slavia's outstanding player last season, will be out for at least six months with a knee injury.

ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH

Karel Jarolim has brought a new ruggedness to traditionally stylish Slavia, who typically play 4-4-2. Martin Latka should partner the experienced Erich Brabec in central defence. In midfield, Vladimir Smicer has usually been given a central role, with Mickael Tavares a little deeper. Smicer is sometimes switched to the right, with Ladislav Volesak in the centre. Up front, Zdenek Senkerik should partner Stanislav Vlcek. Slovak Milan Ivana, Brazilian Gaucho and 18-year-old Tomas Necid are other striking options.

Typical line-up: Vorel - Krajcik, Latka, Brabec, Drizdal - Kalivoda, Tavares, Smicer, Janda - Vlcek, Senkerik.

Goalgetter...Vlcek

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH KAREL JAROLIM

Served as Ivan Hasek's assistant at Strasbourg and has substantial experience of the Czech League. Sons David and Lukas are both players.

THE PLAYER VLADIMIR SMICER

The 34-year-old is as important for what he contributes off the field as on it. Massively experienced but injury-prone.

SPARTA PRAGUE

Shaping up

Coach Bilek has spent the summer reforming the Czech Double winners

Top notch…Sparta win the League

AFTER TAKING CHARGE five games into last season, Michal Bilek led Sparta Prague to the league-and-cup Double. But despite this impressive achievement, the team were far from the finished article, turning in some wobbly performances along the way. This summer, the coach has had the chance to stamp his personality on the team, bringing in or bringing back from loan spells 11 players, including Under-20 World Cup defenders Jan Simunek and Ondrej Kudela.

Tellingly, mercurial midfielder Jan Simak has been shown the door, following some undisciplined performances, but goalkeeper Jaromir Blazek's move to Nurnberg is a big loss.

Of the new arrivals, Jiri Kladrubsky has been favoured at left-back, edging out occasional Czech international Pavel Mares. Midfielders David Limbersky and Martin Abraham have been given starting roles, while keeper Matus Kozacik faces competition from the experienced Tomas Postulka and Under-21 international Zdenek Zlamal.

"We've bought well," says Bilek, whose side faced Arsenal in the Champions League third qualifying round. "All the new players fit into the team, and I believe that we'll be stronger than in the spring."

Playmaker Pavel Horvath is the key man in midfield. Up front, Marek Kulic, who joined Sparta from Mlada Boleslav last winter, having broken into the national team last year, boasts sensational pace. In central defence, Michal Kadlec should be partnered by Tomas Repka, who is back with the team he supported as a child. The combative 33-year-old now wears the captain's armband and marshals the defence.

4-4-2, BUT WHO PLAYS WHERE?

Sparta usually stick to a 4-4-2. However, after a flurry of signings, it's unclear who will fill which role. In midfield, Pavel Horvath is the undisputed playmaker, with Lubos Husek likely to play behind him. New boy Martin Abraham has been used out right, with another new signing, David Limbersky, on the left. Up front, speedy Marek Kulic and tall target man Libor Dosek are the favoured pairing.

Typical line-up: Kozacik - Pospech, Repka, Kadlec, Kladrubsky - Abraham, Horvath, Husek, Limbersky - Kulic, Dosek.

Tall guy…Dosek

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH MICHAL BILEK

A Sparta hero as a player, this former international defender coached at Blsany and Plzen before taking the Letna hot seat last September.

THE PLAYER PAVEL HORVATH

A skilful playmaker with experience of the Portuguese, Turkish and Japanese leagues. He's as committed on the pitch as he is easy-going off it.

SPARTAK MOSCOW

Old boy network

The Russian league runners-up have turned to a former goalkeeper to put them back on top

Killer instinct…Pavlyuchenko (centre)

AMBITIONS ARE HIGH at Spartak Moscow. The club won nine of the first 10 championships after the Russian League came into being in 1992, but have now gone six years without one. They were not happy at finishing runners-up to city rivals CSKA last term or that they were playing second fiddle to Zenit St Petersburg this season. So, in June, after a five-game winless run, Spartak fired coach Vladimir Fedotov and replaced him with director of football and former Spartak and national team keeper Stanislav Cherchesov.

Initially, Cherchesov made no tactical changes but imposed greater discipline, with immediate results. Spartak climbed to the top of the table, and the coach proclaimed: "We have regained the winning spirit, which, I hope, will help us return to the international arena as the great Spartak of the past."

The first challenge was reaching the Champions League group stage, with the hurdle of a third qualifying round tie against Celtic to overcome.

Cherchesov may now try to restore the famous Spartak playing style of quick, short passing.

This summer the club acquired 20-year-old Brazilian striker Welliton from Goias, with the intention of pairing him with Roman Pavlyuchenko, who is rapidly gaining a reputation as a forward with a killer instinct after a period out because of injury.

Welliton joins two other Brazilians – Geder and Mozart – but Spartak are one of the few Russian clubs to boast a strong group of promising home-grown youngsters.

WELLITON OFFERS CHANGE OF TACK

Stanislav Cherchesov likes to use Roman Pavlyuchenko as the lone striker in a 5-4-1 formation, though that may change following the arrival of Welliton. Yegor Titov leads the midfield, assisted by Vladimir Bystrov and Dmitri Torbinski on the flanks. Radoslav Kovac provides the defensive discipline in midfield, in tandem with Mozart, with youngster Renat Sabitov as an alternative.

Typical line-up: Pletikosa - Shishkin, Jiranek, Geder, Stranzl - Bystrov, Kovac, Mozart, Titov, Torbinski - Pavlyuchenko.

Supporting role…Bystrov

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH STANISLAV CHERCHESOV

The former Spartak and national team goalkeeper has been in charge for only a few months, having swapped his role as Spartak's technical director for a place on the bench when Vladimir Fedotov was sacked in June.

THE PLAYER YEGOR TITOV

Spartak's veteran captain and main playmaker is enjoying one of his best spells. As well as offering assists, Titov has also weighed in with a number of goals.

SPORTING LISBON

Feeling fine

Despite the loss of key players, Paulo Bento's side are growing in confidence

Brazil blend...Liedson and Anderson

LAST SEASON, Sporting Lisbon had the youngest team in the group phase of the Champions League and it showed as they finished bottom behind Bayern Munich, Internazionale and Spartak Moscow.

That experience will prove valuable for both coach Paulo Bento and his young charges as they try to get the club into the knockout stages for the first time. This season, Sporting will also have a deeper squad, with seven new faces helping make up for the loss of keeper Ricardo (to Betis), winger Nani (Manchester United) and forward Alecsandro (Cruzeiro).

The new arrivals were Serbian goalkeeper Vladimir Stojkovic (Nantes), Brazilian centre-back Gladstone (Cruzeiro), Montenegrin midfielder Simon Vukcevic (Saturn), Slovak left-back Marian Had (Lokomotiv Moscow), Brazilian defender Pedro Silva (Corinthians), Brazilian forward Derlei (Dinamo Moscow) and Russian midfielder Marat Izmailov (on loan from Lokomotiv Moscow).

The never-say-die attitude of midfield dynamo Joao Moutinho will again be instrumental to his side's fortunes. At the back, Brazilian World Cup-winner Anderson Polga has taken time to settle but his place at the heart of Sporting's defence is safe after some fine displays last season. In attack, fellow Brazilian Liedson has been the club's top scorer since he joined from Corinthians four seasons ago, though he has yet to score in the Champions League.

"We have a lot of new players, but we are not starting over and we are not changing our way of playing," Bento said. "We have done well and will continue with the same philosophy as last season."

BENTO RELIES ON 4-4-2

Paulo Bento will remain faithful to the 4-4-2 formation that has brought Sporting runners-up finishes in the Portuguese League for the past two seasons. The team play a short-passing game based around the backbone of Anderson Polga, Joao Moutinho and Liedson. The latter will again be the focal point of the attack.

Typical line-up: Stojkovic - Abel, Anderson Polga, Gladstone, Ronny - Miguel Veloso, Joao Moutinho, Vukcevic, Romagnoli - Liedson, Purovic.

Backbone...Joao Moutinho

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH PAULO BENTO

Young, ambitious boss who has excelled at Sporting despite his lack of international experience. Believes attack is the best form of defence.

THE PLAYER LIEDSON

Has scored 57 goals in 93 league games since joining Sporting in 2003 but needs to find his golden touch in Europe if the team are to have any chance of advancing past the group phase.

STEAUA BUCHAREST

Ugly fruit

Coach Hagi, a flamboyant talent as a player, is happy for now to grind out wins

Cautious style...Hagi

THIS SUMMER, Romanian champions Steaua Bucharest appointed Gheorghe Hagi as coach. But the former great, so flamboyant as a player, has introduced a more cautious style to the team, which has not gone down well with the fans.

Steaua began the season with five single-goal victories (three 1-0s and two 2-1s), hardly the spectacular the Steaua faithful crave, but Hagi was unapologetic about the new emphasis. "A great team must first have a perfect defence," he insisted. "For the moment, I'm interested only in getting good results, even if it means we play ugly. We need time to build a competitive side and go on to play beautiful football."

Hagi insists he has a long-term project at Steaua. But to be successful he will need to find a playmaker and decide on his first-choice strike partnership.

Club owner Gigi Becali spent £7million over the summer to strengthen the squad ahead of the Champions League campaign, in which Steaua faced BATE Borisov of Belarus in the third qualifying round. The new signings included Colombian goalkeeper Robinson Zapata, Polish defender Pawel Golanski and Nigerian Iefanyi Emeghara, plus Romanians Valentin Badoi and Ionut Rada from Rapid Bucharest and Mihaita Plesan from Politehnica Timisoara.

"We have the best-ever Steaua squad, even better than the 1986 European Cup-winning team," Becali claimed.

EMPHASIS ON THE DEFENCE

Gheorghe Hagi's side play a tight 4-4-2, with the emphasis on defence rather than attack. Captain Mirel Radoi is the engine of the side, driving his team forward, while centre-back Dorin Goian is a faultless operator at the back and the scorer of headed goals from set-pieces on a regular basis.

Typical line-up: Zapata - Golanski, Goian, Ghionea, Marin - Nicolita, Radoi, Petre, Croitoru - Neaga, Dica.

Engine...Radoi

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH GHEORGHE HAGI

Romania's greatest player faces the challenge of making the switch to being a leading coach.

THE PLAYER NICOLAE DICA

A clever, skilful forward and prolific goalscorer. He hit five in last season's Champions League campaign.

STUTTGART

My Veh

The coach of the surprise Bundesliga champions will have his work cut out to succeed in Europe

Just champion…Cacau

FOR MOST OF last season, Stuttgart harboured hopes of finishing third in the Bundesliga to wangle a Champions League spot for the first time in four seasons. But Armin Veh's hard-working side exceeded all expectations by snatching the title, Stuttgart's first since 1992, on the last day of the season.

One of the keys to success was the midfield diamond, a unit that combined power, industry and guile. So it was rather surprising that the club brought in playmaker Yildiray Basturk from Hertha Berlin in the close season.

There were also two attacking arrivals – Brazilian Ewerthon (on loan from Zaragoza) and Romanian international Ciprian Marica (Shahktar Donetsk) – to bolster a forward line that already includes another Brazilian, Cacau, and new German international Mario Gomez, who signed a new contract over the summer.

Other signings included Brazilian centre-back Gledson (Hansa Rostock) and goalkeeper Raphael Schafer as a replacement for Valencia-bound Timo Hildebrand. Schafer proved himself a capable operator in six seasons with Nurnberg, but the authority of Hildebrand will be badly missed.

The new arrivals will put pressure on the youngsters – Gomez, Sami Khedira, Thomas Hitzlsperger and Roberto Hilbert – who played such a big role in last season's unexpected success, as did Mexicans Pavel Pardo and Ricardo Osorio, who arrived after the 2006 World Cup.

Last term, Stuttgart proved greater than the sum of their parts. But it is far from certain that they can extend that success to the European arena.

4-4-2 OR 4-1-4-1?

Armin Veh's first love is 4-4-2, though a 4-1-4-1, with four attack-minded midfielders across the park, is another option. Sami Khedira could lose his place to new signing Yildiray Basturk. The width provided by Ludovic Magnin and Roberto Hilbert is crucial, as are the organisational abilities of centre-back Fernando Meira. In attack, Mario Gomez and Ciprian Marica provide alternatives to Cacau and Ewerthon.

Typical line-up: Schafer - Osorio, Fernando Meira, Gledson, Magnin - Pardo, Hilbert, Hitzlsperger, Basturk - Cacau, Ewerthon.

On the attack…Ewerthon

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ARMIN VEH

Hired as a stop-gap replacement for Giovanni Trapattoni in 2006, but proved so successful that he stayed in the job. His only previous Bundesliga coaching experience was with Hansa Rostock.

THE PLAYER THOMAS HITZLSPERGER

The dynamic former Aston Villa midfielder emerged as a true leader last season. Nicknamed "The Hammer" for his ferocious left-foot shot.

Great result…Tampere (blue) v Levski

TAMPERE UNITED

Shock tactics

Finns ain't what they used to be

OVERCOMING Bulgaria's seasoned European campaigners Levski Sofia in the Champions League second qualifying round was perhaps the biggest achievement in the history of Finnish champions Tampere United. Admittedly, the Bulgarians were ring-rusty and paid dearly for underestimating their opponents, but there was no doubt about the Finns' fighting spirit and tactical unity, especially in the 1-0 win in Sofia (they also won 1-0 at home).

Coach Ari Hjelm has done an excellent job during six years at Tampere, winning the league title twice and consistently keeping the team among Finland's front-runners. After last year's championship, he concentrated on retaining his key performers rather than splashing out in the transfer market, and the team are once again leading the title race.

The wins over Levski, which set up a third qualifying round tie with Rosenborg, have drawn a lot of foreign interest in Tampere's young players, including rapidly improving midfielder Juska Savolainen and Tomi Petrescu, a fast midfielder-striker of Romanian origin.

One of Hjelm's main headaches is a lack of quality beyond the first XI.

COUNTER-ATTACKING MIDFIELDERS

Ari Hjelm favours a 4-1-4-1 formation. In defence, the key names are goalkeeper Mikko Kaven and big stopper Mathias Lindstrom. Tough-tackling Jarkko Wiss operates deep in a midfield role. Jari Niemi is the sole front-runner, with midfielders Tomi Petrescu, Antti Pohja and Juska Savolainen responsible for mounting counter-attacks. Long-striding Sakari Saarinen is the workhorse of the team, popping up almost anywhere.

Typical line-up: Kaven - Jarvinen, Lindstrom, Kujala, Ojanpera - Wiss - Petrescu, Pohja, Savolainen, Saarinen - Niemi.

Front-runner…Niemi

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ARI HJELM

A former striker and the first Finn to gain 100 caps. The 45-year-old is predicted to have a great future in coaching.

THE PLAYER MIKKO KAVEN

The veteran goalkeeper is playing better than ever, making a mockery of the foreign clubs who have overlooked him in the past.

TOULOUSE

Baup and grind

The team may not be pretty to watch but their organised approach has proved surprisingly effective

Unheralded arrival...Ilunga

TOULOUSE SCRAPED third place on the final day of last season's French League, beating Bordeaux 3-1 with a hat-trick from Swedish forward Johan Elmander as their closest rivals all fell by the wayside.

That secured a first appearance in the Champions League, with the qualifying hurdle of Liverpool to be overcome to reach the group stage.

Coach Elie Baup has been there before with Bordeaux. However, this summer's signings have been more InterToto Cup than Champions League – defenders Jon Jonsson from Elfsborg and Herita Ilunga (Saint-Etienne), goalkeeper Rudy Riou (Istres) and forward Andre-Pierre Gignac (Lorient).

Injuries to first-choice centre-backs Dominique Arribage and Daniel Congre are a major concern and will mean an early opportunity for Jonsson. Gignac is also likely to command a place in the starting line-up, though Francileudo dos Santos, the Brazil-born Tunisian international striker, returned to the club this summer following a spell on loan at Swiss champions Zurich.

Toulouse's midfield contains experience in the form of Laurent Batlles and promising talent in the form of Jeremy Mathieu.

The team are unlikely to set Europe alight this season, but Baup will have them well-organised. That is a given for a coach who cites Carlos Alberto Parreira, Fabio Capello and Giovanni Trapattoni as his role models. Baup's biggest worry was that someone would come in with a major offer for Elmander before the transfer window closed on August 31.

MATURITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Elie Baup aims for a compact, meticulously organised 4-4-2 or 4-5-1. His relatively young side play with a surprising amount of maturity and flexibility. Their strong suits? A zonal defence, the way they squeeze the space for the opposition to work in, and their incisive use of the ball in attacking mode.

Typical line-up: Douchez - Ebondo, Jonsson, Cetto, Ilunga – Dieuze, Batlles, Mathieu, Emana - Elmander, Gignac.

Midfield berth...Mathieu

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH ELIE BAUP

The arch-pragmatist won the French title with Bordeaux in 1999 and also has led Saint-Etienne. His trademark baseball cap is one of the most distinctive sights in French football.

THE PLAYER JOHAN ELMANDER

Swedish striker who struggled in his first spell in Europe, as a teenager with Feyenoord. But he has been a big hit in Toulouse, whom he joined from Brondby last summer.

VALENCIA

The right mix

Returnees from injury and new signings make the *Ches* strong contenders

Competition...Villa

LAST SEASON, the squad was decimated by injuries to key players such as Vicente and Edu. Yet Valencia still came close to challenging for the Spanish league title and ran Chelsea close in their Champions League quarter-final encounter.

This season, with all the wounded back in action, the *Ches* should do even better. Coach Quique Sanchez Flores has a competitive squad that is capable of doing well in both domestic and European campaigns (Valencia faced Elfsborg of Sweden for a place in the Champions League group stage). New signings include Spanish defender Ivan Helguera (Real Madrid) and attacker Javier Arizmendi (Deportivo La Coruna), German goalkeeper Timo Hildebrand (Stuttgart) and giant Serbian striker Nikola Zigic (Racing Santander).

Sanchez Flores has strong competition for places all over the pitch. Hildebrand will challenge Santiago Canizares, approaching the end of his career; Helguera puts pressure on the first-choice centre-backs, Carlos Marchena and Raul Albiol; Edu could come in for either David Albelda or Ruben Baraja in central midfield; in attack, David Villa and youngster David Silva, a revelation last season, have Zigic, Arizmendi and Fernando Morientes looming on the sidelines.

Meanwhile, the coach's position has been strengthened by the departure of technical director Amedeo Carboni, with whom he clashed last season.

The one weakness is a lack of midfield creativity. Dutchman Rafael Van der Vaart, who was close to a switch from Hamburg at press time, would help alleviate this problem.

BIG-NAME RESERVES LIE IN WAIT

Sanchez Flores favours 4-4-2. Santiago Canizares stays as first-choice keeper, for now, while Ivan Helguera could eventually come into central defence. David Albelda and Ruben Baraja form a solid central midfield partnership, their lack of penetration compensated for by Joaquin and Vicente on the flanks. In attack, Fernando Morientes and Nikola Zigic are more physical alternatives to David Silva.

Typical line-up: Canizares – Miguel, Marchena, Albiol, Del Horno - Joaquin, Albelda, Baraja, Vicente – Silva, Villa.

Holding on...Canizares

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH QUIQUE SANCHEZ FLORES

Former Valencia defender who has been compared to his predecessor, Rafael Benitez.

THE PLAYER DAVID VILLA

It's a complete mystery why the prolific striker was not snapped up by one of the continent's really big guns.

WERDER BREMEN

Going Brazilian

Carlos Alberto has joined compatriot Diego as Werder look to build on last season's European campaign

Outstanding performer...Diego

LAST SEASON, Werder Bremen were unlucky to be drawn with the Champions League pre-tournament favourites, Barcelona and Chelsea, in the group stage. But they gave both teams a run for their money, taking four points from their home matches against them.

However, this summer, German international striker Miroslav Klose jumped ship, joining Bayern Munich for a reported fee of £11million. Klose, scorer of 60 Bundesliga goals in three seasons at Werder, will undoubtedly be missed, even though the club replaced him with Boubacar Sanogo from Hamburg. In addition, Werder can welcome back forward Ivan Klasnic following a successful kidney transplant operation.

The club's other main signing, Brazilian Carlos Alberto, has an interesting Champions League pedigree, having scored in Porto's 2004 Champions League Final victory over Monaco. Some have assumed that the ex-Corinthians man would be used as a second striker. But coach Thomas Schaaf insists that he will be given an attacking midfield slot, to get the best from his dribbling skills and imagination.

Schaaf has said that Carlos Alberto can play alongside his compatriot Diego, the outstanding performer for Werder last season. But further strong performances from the latter will add to the speculation that he will move on, with Real Madrid leading the chase.

Unlike last season, Werder were facing a qualifying tie – against Dinamo Zagreb – to reach the Champions League group stage.

HOW WILL CARLOS ALBERTO FIT IN?

The big question is how new signing Carlos Alberto will co-habit with chief creator Diego. The answer is most likely in a midfield role in a 4-4-2 system, behind two forwards (from Hugo Almeida, Boubacar Sanogo, Aaron Hunt, Ivan Klasnic and Markus Rosenberg). A knee injury may keep defensive midfielder Torsten Frings out of the early action, giving Daniel Jensen a chance.

Typical line-up: Wiese - Fritz, Mertesacker, Naldo, Wome - Frings, Carlos Alberto, Borowski, Diego - Rosenberg, Hunt.

Co-habitation...Carlos Alberto

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH THOMAS SCHAAF

A one-club man. He appeared in 262 league games for Werder then joined the backroom staff, becoming head coach in 1999. Schaaf's low-key approach has squeezed the best from some difficult players.

THE PLAYER DIEGO

The Brazilian midfielder enjoyed a fantastic first season in Germany after relatively poor campaigns at Porto, earning a recall by Brazil and winning Germany's player of the year award.

ZURICH

Testing times

The Swiss champions have had a summer of upheaval

Major player...Hannu Tihinen

ZURICH WON THE Swiss league title for the second successive time last term, but major personnel changes over the summer were hardly the ideal preparation as they sought their first appearance in the Champions League group stage.

Coach Lucien Favre, who engineered Zurich's recent successes, left for Hertha Berlin, and three key midfielders also departed – Blerim Dzemaili (Bolton), Xavier Margairaz (Osasuna) and Gokhan Inler (Udinese).

Favre's replacement is former national Under-21 boss Bernard Challandes. The new signings are defensive midfielder Silvan Aegerter, who has Champions League experience from his spell at Thun, Tunisian international forward Yassine Chikhaoui (from Etoile Sahel) and Valenciennes striker Eric Hassli, who at 1.93m offers an aerial threat.

Zurich's established major players include Finnish international defender and club captain Hannu Tihinen and Brazilian midfielder Cesar, who has built a fine understanding with lively compatriot forward Raffael.

Last season, Zurich missed out on the Champions League group stage when losing to Austria Wien in the second qualifying round. This term, they went straight into the third qualifying round, in which they faced Besiktas.

DEFENCE INTO ATTACK

Bernard Challandes is a disciple of 4-4-2 and places much emphasis on tactical discipline and getting the ball rapidly to the strikers. Playmaker Cesar is the main supply route. The back-line is well shielded by three defensive midfielders, though each of the latter can also contribute in the attacking-third, especially Almen Abdi, who is a set-piece specialist.

Typical line-up: Leoni - Stahel, Von Bergen, Tihinen, Rochat - Abdi, Okonkwo, Aegerter, Cesar - Chikhaoui, Raffael.

Set-piece specialist...Abdi

THE MAIN MEN

THE COACH BERNARD CHALLANDES

The new boss after Lucien Favre's switch to Hertha Berlin. Had spells at Servette and Young Boys many years ago, but has worked for the Swiss federation since 1995, most recently as Under-21 coach.

THE PLAYER RAFFAEL

The Brazilian striker has been Zurich's leading scorer over the past two seasons, with 27 goals. Joined in 2005 after two seasons with Chiasso in the Swiss second division.

The following 96 clubs were all still in the UEFA Cup as we went to press.

Andreas Johansson, AaB Aalborg

AAB AALBORG

COACH: Erik Hamren. Fifty-year-old Swede who won his domestic cup three times, with AIK Stockholm and Orgryte, before joining AaB in 2004.
KEY MAN: Andreas Johansson. Midfielder who signed in the summer from Wigan and has immediately impressed.
LINE-UP: Jensen - Olesen, Califf, Risgaard, Jakobsen - Lindstrom, Johansson, Enevoldsen, Nomvethe - Curth, Prica.

AaB lost star man Rasmus Wurtz to FC Copenhagen in the summer and had a stuttering start with only one win in five league games. New keeper Martin Jensen also has to fill the boots of departed club legend Jimmy Nielsen. The Danes reached the UEFA Cup second qualifying round via the InterToto Cup following a 3-2 aggregate win over Gent, with the winner scored by Johansson.

ABERDEEN

COACH: Jimmy Calderwood. Perma-tanned former Dunfermline boss who secured Aberdeen's first European qualification since 2002.
KEY MAN: Jackie McNamara. At 33, his best years may be behind him but the experience of the former Celtic, Wolves and Scotland defender/midfielder will be vital.
LINE-UP: Soutar - Hart, Diamond, Severin, Mair - Nicholson, McNamara, Clark, Smith - Lovell, Mackie.

Aberdeen finished third in the Scottish League last season, their best position since 1994. They took part in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round without central defender Russell Anderson, their outstanding player last season, who has joined Sunderland. Zander Diamond now has extra responsibility, while other important players include striker Darren Mackie, a local boy who has been scoring goals on a regular basis.

AIK STOCKHOLM

COACH: Rickard Norling. A young veteran, sometimes called "Sweden's Mourinho" for his outspoken comments.
KEY MAN: Dulee Johnson. Dynamic Liberian international midfielder who has modelled his game on Claude Makelele's.
LINE-UP: Orlund - Tamandi, Arnefjord, Johansson, Karlsson - Pavey, Johnson, Stephenson, Tjernstrom - Figuereido, Obolo.

AIK, Swedish league runners-up in 2006, are no longer the buoyant club that reached the Champions League group stage eight years ago. They have had a difficult season, during which they have fallen behind arch-rivals Djurgardens and Hammarby. They have tried to solve their long-term goalscoring problem by signing no fewer than three Argentinian forwards – Wilton Figuereido, Ivan Obolo and Lucas Valdemarin.

ANORTHOSIS

COACH: Temuri Ketsbaia. Always unconventional, the former Georgian winger has been in charge here since 2002. Retired as a player last season.
KEY MAN: Lukasz Sosin. Prolific ex-Polish international striker signed from Apollon Limassol in the summer.
LINE-UP: Beqaj - Poursaitides, Lambrou, Katsavakis, Ndikumania - Panagi, Zlogar, Nicolaou - Pahars - Boaventura, Sosin.

Third in the Cypriot League in 2006-07, Anorthosis qualified for the UEFA Cup by winning the Cypriot Cup, beating Omonia Nicosia in the Final. The Famagusta club have proved in the past they should not be taken lightly in Europe, notably knocking out Trabzonspor of Turkey in a Champions League qualifier in 2005. Their modus operandi is simple: keep it tight at the back, with an eye to making swift counter-attacks.

ARIS SALONIKA

COACH: Juan Carlos Oliva. Spaniard who lasted 45 days at Alaves in early 2006.
KEY MAN: Koke. Spanish forward or attacking midfielder who is Aris's main hope for goals.
LINE-UP: Chalkias - Neto, Papadopoulos, Ronaldo Guiaro, Aurelio - Toni, Nebegleras, Jonan, Javito - Koke, Felipe.

After finishing fourth in the Greek League last season, Aris parted company with Spanish coach Quique Hernandez, who had been in the job only six months, replacing him with compatriot Oliva. The new man made a number of new signings, nearly all from Spain and Brazil. They include Brazilian defenders Neto, Papadopoulos, Ronaldo Guiaro and Marco Aurelio, and Spanish forward Felipe.

ARTMEDIA BRATISLAVA

COACH: Vladimir Weiss. Made Slovak footballing history by steering the outfit to the Champions League group stage two years ago. Back after a spell in Russia with Saturn.
KEY MAN: Jan Kozak. Cerebral midfield general of no little vision and passing ability. Surprisingly failed to adapt during a short spell at West Brom.
LINE-UP: Kamenar - Cisovsky, Burak, Dosoudil, Urbanek - Borbely - Obzera, Gajdos, Kozak - M Durica, Fodrek.

An old boys' reunion has taken place at the Slovak league runners-up this summer, with famous Class of 2005 members Balasz Borbely (ex-Kaiserslautern), Ales Urbanek and Lubo Reiter (both Slavia Prague) returning. Began the new Slovak championship in fine fettle, winning four of their first five fixtures.

ATLETICO MADRID

COACH: Javier Aguirre. Former Mexican national coach who established his La Liga coaching credentials during four seasons with Osasuna.
KEY MAN: Diego Forlan. The Uruguayan striker, so prolific at Villarreal, has to fill the shoes of Fernando Torres.
LINE-UP: Leo Franco - Seitaridis, Pablo, Perea, Pernia - Maniche, Raul Garcia, Maxi Rodriguez, Simao - Aguero, Forlan.

Atletico finished a disappointing seventh in La Liga last term but they stuck with Aguirre and made the UEFA Cup via the InterToto Cup. They are without talismanic striker Fernando Torres, sold to Liverpool

Jackie McNamara, Aberdeen (right)

after years of frustration at Atletico's failure to reach the Champions League, and Martin Petrov, who joined the Thaksin-funded revolution at Manchester City. The new signings – who include Forlan, Portuguese winger Simao Sabrosa (Benfica), Jose Antonio Reyes (Arsenal), versatile midfielder Raul Garcia (Osasuna), Luis Garcia (Liverpool), Italian goalkeeper Christian Abbiati (Milan) and Brazilian midfielder Cleber (Santos) – suggest Atletico are well-placed to survive their first year AT (After Torres) both in La Liga and in Europe.

AUSTRIA WIEN

COACH: Georg Zellhofer. Had a great spell at Pasching, but has so far been unlucky with Viennese big guns Rapid and Austria.
KEY MAN: Jocelyn Blanchard. The hard-tackling French midfielder is the heart and soul of the team. He is technically skilled, but usually more concerned about supporting the defence.
LINE-UP: Safar - Troyansky, Ertl, Schiemer, Majstorovic - Sulimani, Blanchard, Acimovic, Lasnik - Aigner, Kuljic.

Finished only sixth in the Austrian League last term but qualified for the UEFA Cup after retaining the Austrian Cup, once again beating Mattersburg in the Final. This summer, in a dramatic transfer swoop, they signed striker Sanel Kuljic from Swiss side Sion. The club may soon also count on Rubin Okotie and Michael Madl, who both showed great potential during Austria's Under-20 World Cup campaign in Canada.

AZ ALKMAAR

COACH: Louis Van Gaal. Former Ajax and Barcelona boss who has taken AZ to the brink of success in Holland with an attacking style.
KEY MAN: Maarten Martens. Playmaker and favourite of Van Gaal. Two-footed, with fabulous technique.
LINE-UP: Waterman - Steinsson, Jaliens, Donk, Pocognoli - Schaars, De Zeeuw, Martens, Cziommer - Ari, Dembele.

AZ blew the Dutch league title on the final day of last season, losing unexpectedly to Excelsior, and then lost out to Ajax in the Champions League play-offs. But they have been a force to be reckoned with in the UEFA Cup in recent years. Suffered a serious blow with the departure of experienced striker Shota Arveladze to Levante, while another veteran, Tim De Cler, moved to Feyenoord. The most notable newcomers were Brazilian striker Ari, from Sweden's Kalmar, and Italian forward Graziano Pelle (Lecce). AZ can also call upon some promising young players, including Ryan Donk, an athletic central defender who has already been compared to Jaap Stam, and imposing striker Mousa Dembele.

Franck Ribery, Bayern Munich

BASLE

COACH: Christian Gross. In charge for the past eight years. He was derided by the English press during a short spell at Tottenham, but in German-speaking circles his credibility is intact, not surprisingly for someone who has won five league titles with Grasshopper and Basle.
KEY MAN: Ivan Ergic. Highly-influential right-sided or central midfield Serb strategist who has rediscovered his best form after a long period of illness and depression.
LINE-UP: Costanzo - Hodel, Majstorovic, Marque, Nakata - Huggel, Ergic, Carlitos, Chipperfield - Streller, Eduardo.

Once all-powerful in Switzerland, Basle have had to play second fiddle to Zurich in the last two domestic championships. This season could be another relatively tricky one, especially after the departure of brilliant young playmaker Ivan Rakitic, Croat striker Mladen Petric and trusty defender Boris Smiljanic, to Schalke, Dortmund and Grasshopper respectively. Basle have chosen to go back to the future, recruiting old favourites – front-man Marco Streller from Stuttgart and midfielder Benjamin Huggel (Eintracht Frankfurt).

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

COACH: Michael Skibbe. Ex-Borussia Dortmund boss and German national team assistant with a well-deserved reputation for his meticulous work on the training field.
KEY MAN: Bernd Schneider. The years go by but the diminutive little midfielder is as dynamic and imaginative as ever. He now occupies a central rather than a right-sided role.
LINE-UP: Adler - Castro, Friedrich, Sinkiewicz, Vidal - Ramelow, Rolfes - Kiessling, Schneider, Barnetta - Gekas.

The departure of Brazilian centre-back Juan to Roma and top scorer Andrii Voronin to Liverpool was disappointing. However, more-than-adequate replacements have been found in the shape of Mainz's German international defender Manuel Friedrich and the Bundesliga's leading marksman of last season, Theo Gekas, from Bochum. Arguably, no other team in Germany has as much young talent as Leverkusen, the fresh-faced corps headed by attacker Stefan Kiessling and Gonzalo Castro at full-back.

BAYERN MUNICH

COACH: Ottmar Hitzfeld. In his second stint at the Bayern helm. The natural authority, tactical awareness and composure at the eye of the

Bernd Schneider, Bayer Leverkusen

storm make "The General" the perfect man to lead the extensive roster of megastars.
KEY MAN: Franck Ribery. Nominally positioned on the left of midfield but free to roam. The little French international's powers of acceleration, unique dribbling ability and naughty schoolboy character have already won the hearts of Bavarian fans.
LINE-UP: Kahn - Lahm, Lucio, Demichelis, Jansen - Van Bommel, Ze Roberto - Altintop, Ribery - Klose, Toni.

After failing to qualify for the Champions League following a fourth-placed Bundesliga finish last term, Bayern have to content themselves with the competition that president Franz Beckenbauer once dubbed the "Losers Cup". But needs must, and since Bayern are in dire need of silverware to restore their image, nothing less than victory in the Final in May will be acceptable. It is, in fact, a reasonable objective for a team featuring the brand new grade-A frontline of Ribery, Miroslav Klose and Luca Toni.

BELCHATOW

COACH: Orest Lenczyk. Highly-experienced 63-year-old who has built the team without splashing out.
KEY MAN: Lukasz Gargula. Playmaker who confirmed his abilities last season, not only at club level but also with the Polish national team.
LINE-UP: Lech - Herrera, Pietrasiak, Stolarczyk, Kowalczyk - Wrobel, Strak, Gargula, Jarzebowski, Rachwal - Nowak.

Belchatow have made huge progress since Lenczyk took over in October 2005, when they were struggling against relegation. Last season was the best ever for the club – they finished Polish league runners-up, taking the title fight right to the last day of the season. That was despite having lost their leading scorer, Radoslaw Matusiak, who left for Palermo during the winter break. Belchatow have one of the lowest budgets in the Polish top flight, £1.4million.

BELENENSES

COACH: Jorge Jesus. Steered Belenenses into the UEFA Cup in his first season in charge.
KEY MAN: Dady. Cape Verde-born forward who was the club's leading scorer last season with 12 goals.
LINE-UP: Costinha - Candido Costa, Rolando, Devic, Rodrigo Alvim - Silas, Jose Pedro, Djurdevic, Mendonca - Dady, Joao Paulo.

The Blues, from the Belem quarter of Lisbon, entered the UEFA Cup as losing finalists in the Portuguese Cup, 1-0 to Champions League qualifiers Sporting Lisbon. It is their first European campaign for 18 seasons. Apart from Dady, other major players are defender Rolando and midfielder Ivan Djurdevic.

BESA KAVAJE

COACH: Silviu Dimitrescu. The Romanian is in his first season with Besa, having coached relegated Apolonia Fier last season.
KEY MAN: Parid Xhihani. Goalscoring captain and heart of the team. Came through the ranks.
LINE-UP: Zendeli - Nana, Ramadani, Duro, Arapi - Abdullah, Alikaj, Veliaj, Lila - Xhihani, Elokan.

The Albanian Cup winners from the town of Kavaje on the west coast. Caused a shock when beating Serbian side Bezanija in the first qualifying round, but then defender Alban Dragusha failed a drugs test after the away goals victory. With Erand Hoxha suspended for the second qualifying round against Litex Lovech after being sent off against Bezanija, Besa signed Albert Duro, ex-Steaua Bucharest, from Tirana. The players shared a £28,000 bonus for their first-round victory.

BLACKBURN

COACH: Mark Hughes. The former Wales boss has excelled in his first club position, prompting speculation that he might one day succeed his former boss Alex Ferguson at Manchester United.
KEY MAN: Benni McCarthy. South African striker who revived his reputation at Rovers last season.
LINE-UP: Friedel - Ooijer, Nelsen, Samba, Warnock - Bentley, Tugay, Savage, Gamst Pedersen - McCarthy, Santa Cruz.

Under Hughes, Blackburn have gained a somewhat unfair reputation for rough play, but they have also shown themselves capable of a more stylish approach. The summer addition of Paraguayan Roque Santa Cruz gave them an extra attacking weapon for a European campaign that began in the InterToto Cup. Blackburn bucked the big-spending trend followed by most other Premiership clubs and, until a promised American takeover materialises, they will have to rely on the excellent work of Hughes, whose team mixes the rough with the smooth. Robbie Savage is a physical presence in midfield, the more creative David Bentley is an exciting prospect, and Morten Gamst Pedersen can be relied upon for the spectacular.

Jussi Jaaskelainen, Bolton

Dady, Belenenses (right)

BOLTON

COACH: Sammy Lee. First season as the main man after many years as a number two.
KEY MAN: Jussi Jaaskelainen. Consistently one of the best goalkeepers in the Premier League.
LINE-UP: Jaaskelainen - Hunt, Meite, Cid, Hunt - Diouf, Speed, Nolan, McCann - Helguson, Anelka.

Unpredictable times at Bolton following the departure of Sam Allardyce after eight seasons. Lee has switched from Allardyce's direct 4-5-1 to a more attractive 4-4-2. Central defender Tal Ben Haim's transfer to Chelsea was a blow, but Bolton reinforced in other areas, with the arrival of Swedish midfielder Christian Wilhelmsson on loan from Roma, full-back Jlloyd Samuel, midfielder Gavin McCann, defender Andy O'Brien, Icelandic forward Heidar Helguson and midfielder Mikel Alonso, brother of Liverpool's Xabi. After losing all their first three league games, a repeat of last season's seventh place, which secured UEFA Cup qualification, seems unlikely.

BORDEAUX

COACH: Laurent Blanc. Several Ligue 1 clubs had toyed with the idea of appointing the former French international sweeper. Now he finally has his chance and has to disprove the theory that great players do not make great coaches.
KEY MAN: Alou Diarra. With Rio Mavuba moving to Villarreal, Bordeaux desperately needed a high-quality defensive midfielder. They found one in the French national-teamer, who fell out with Gerard Houllier at Lyon last season.
LINE-UP: Rame - Jurietti, Jemmali, Planus, Chalme - Alonso, Diarra, Fernando - Micoud - Chamakh, Bellion.

Bordeaux's owners, the M6 television station, have often shown a miserly approach to team strengthening but not this summer, with Diarra, striker David Bellion (ex-Nice), full-back Mathieu Chalme (Lille) and central defender Souleymane Diawara (Charlton) arriving. One thing is for sure. Bordeaux will be much more attractive under Blanc than his safety-first predecessor Ricardo.

BRANN

COACH: Mons Ivar Mjelde. Former player with Lillestrom, Austria Wien and Brann. Head coach since 2003.
KEY MAN: Martin Andresen. The club captain is in his third season in Bergen.
LINE-UP: Opdal - Guntveit, Bjarnarson, Sigurdsson, Hanstveit - Solli, Andresen, Bakke, Moen - Winters, Helstad.

Brann have not won the Norwegian league title since 1963 despite enormous support. They failed at the last hurdle last season, qualifying instead for the UEFA Cup, but are closing in on this year's title. Striker Thorstein Helstad is domestic top scorer and has reignited his career after returning from Rosenborg. Petter Vaagan Moen and Scot Robbie Winters are also important up front. Icelandic duo Olafur Orn Bjarnarson and Kristjan Sigurdsson are key at the back. Midfielder Hassan El Fakiri was signed this summer after years in Germany. Eirik Bakke (ex-Leeds) seems to have put his injuries behind him.

CFR CLUJ

COACH: Ioan Andone. Fired by Dinamo Bucharest in June 2006 despite the team being top of the table at the time.
KEY MEN: Eugen Trica. The midfielder is one of the few Romanians in a squad containing 19 foreigners.
LINE-UP: Stancioiu - Tony, Cadu, De Souza, Panin - Andre Leao, Dani, Semedo, Trica, Culio - Didi.

The major summer event was the replacement of coach Cristiano Bergodi with Andone. The club also signed a further nine foreigners as

part of an ambitious plan to break the supremacy of Bucharest teams Steaua, Dinamo and Rapid.

CLUB BRUGGE

COACH: Jacky Mathijssen. New boss, arriving after guiding unfashionable Charleroi to fifth place last term.
KEY MAN: Francois Sterchele. The top marksman in Belgium last season with 21 goals for Germinal Beerschot.
LINE-UP: Stijnen - Priske, Kucera, Clement, Klukowski - Englebert, Geraerts, Leko, Blondel - Djokic, Sterchele.

Confidence is not exactly high in these parts after a wretched 2006-07, the Blue and Blacks ending up in the unfamiliar surroundings of sixth place rather than challenging for the Belgian title and qualifying for Europe through a 1-0 victory over Standard in the Belgian Cup Final. Nor has the mood been improved by serious knee injuries to midfielders Gertjan De Mets and Koen Daerden – a new signing from Genk – who will both be out until the New Year at least.

CSKA SOFIA

COACH: Stoicho Mladenov. Former Bulgarian national team manager.
KEY MAN: Velisar Dimitrov. The most important figure in midfield.
LINE-UP: Petrov - Iliev, Tunchev, Todorov, Vuyadinovic - Yanche, Markinyos - Udodzhi, Dimitrov, Amunike - Garses.

CSKA have had two difficult seasons, failing to win the Bulgarian championship and making little progress in the UEFA Cup. But this summer they underlined their ambition with a series of foreign signings, including Panamanian striker Jose Luis Garses, Montenegrin defender Nikola Vuyadinovic and Nigerian midfielder Kevin Amunike.

DINAMO MINSK

COACH: Alexander Khatskevich. Former Dynamo Kyiv midfielder who accepted the job on condition that he could carry on playing.
KEY MAN: Bruno Mbanangoye. Powerful Gabonese international attacking midfielder, considered the best foreign player in Belarus.
LINE-UP: Lesko - Veretilo, Pavlukovich, Kamdem, Pankov - Temrukov, Khatskevich, Mbanangoye, Nudnyi - Putilo, Rak.

Dinamo were the best-known Belorussian team during the Soviet era but have struggled to maintain their dominance in recent years. They finished league runners-up to BATE Borisov in 2006. The club have a strong Brazilian influence, with Marcio and Edu, who recently adopted Belorussian nationality, offering attacking options to Anton Putilo and Slovak Robert Rak.

DINAMO TBILISI

COACH: Dusan Uhrin. Experienced boss who was in charge of the Czech Republic side at Euro 1996.
KEY MAN: Ned Zelic. Highly-experienced and much-travelled Australian defender.
LINE-UP: Owono - Krsko, Zelic, S Kashia, G Kashia - Digmelashvili, Khmaladze, Kobakhidze, Odikadze, Peiqrishvili - Akiremy.

The dominant club in Georgia throughout the 1990s, Dinamo Tbilisi have seen their crown slip in recent seasons, though they ran Olimpi Rustavi close last season. Other key players include midfielder Alexander Kobakhidze, a highly promising product of Dinamo's youth school, and hard-working captain David Digmelashvili, back in Georgia after spells in Turkey and Italy.

Velisar Dimitrov, CSKA Sofia

Scott Wilson, Dunfermline

DNIPRO DNIPROPETROVSK

COACH: Oleg Protasov. Ex-Soviet international striker who steered Dnipro to sixth place in the Ukrainian League in his first season in charge.
KEY MAN: Serhii Nazarenko. A graduate of Dnipro's football academy, nicknamed "Zidane" for his resemblance to the Frenchman.
LINE-UP: Startsev - Sviderskyi, Rusol, Gritsay - Kravchenko, Kankava, Shelaiev, Nazarenko, Andriyenko - Vorobei, Samodin.

Protasov has eschewed foreign signings in favour of players from Ukraine and the former Soviet states. "We have an ambitious group of footballers who would like to show their talents in Europe," he says. "Players such as Andrii Rusol, Viacheslav Sviderskyi, Oleh Shelaiev, Serhii Nazarenko and Andrii Vorobei all played at the World Cup finals in Germany." He has plenty of choice in attack, with two from Vorobei, Russian Sergey Samodin, Konstantin Balabanov and Belorussian Sergey Kornilenko.

DROGHEDA UNITED

COACH: Paul Doolin. At Drogheda since 2003. Began his managerial career with UCD.
KEY MAN: Sami Ristila. Striker who won two caps with Finland. Joined the Drogs from Haka in 2004.
LINE-UP: Connor - Shelley, Tambouras, Gray, Webb - Robinson, Keegan, Byrne, Keddy - Zayed, Ristila.

Yet to win the Premier Division. In 2005 they won the FAI Cup for the first time and won the all-Ireland Setanta Cup in 2006 and 2007. Australia-born centre-half John Tambouras is a recent signing.

DUNFERMLINE

COACH: Stephen Kenny. Irishman who led two teams (Derry City and Dunfermline) to cup finals in Ireland and Scotland within 12 months.
KEY MAN: Scott Wilson. A natural leader in defence.
LINE-UP: McKenzie - Shields, Bamba, Thomson, Wilson - Harper, Young, McManus, Glass - Burchill, Crawford.

Relegated from the Scottish Premier League last season but qualified for the UEFA Cup by reaching the Cup Final, which they lost 1-0 to champions Celtic. Gary Mason and Dorus De Vries have moved on, but Kenny has brought in the experienced Stephen Glass, Tam McManus and Kevin Harper. Glass will fill Mason's shoes; McManus opted for Dunfermline despite offers from SPL clubs.

Mikel Arteta, Everton

EKRANAS

COACH: Darius Butkus. Thirty-four-year-old former player promoted from his position in charge of the reserves after the sacking of Saulius Sirmelis.
KEY MAN: Povilas Luksys. Nothing aesthetically pleasing about this striker's style but very single-minded and effective.
LINE-UP: Skrupskis - Rahn, Rimavicius, Skroblas, Paulaskas - Tomkevicius, Bicka, Varnas - Savenas - Pogreban, Luksys.

Lithuanian league runners-up last year. A well-organised side with a surfeit of young talent. However, they lack consistency, the principal reason they currently find themselves out of contention for the domestic title.

EMPOLI

COACH: Luigi Cagni. Much-travelled, mostly in Serie B, but enjoying the best spell of his career.
KEY MAN: Luca Saudati. Empoli's top scorer last term with 14 league goals.
LINE-UP: Bassi - Raggi, Adani, Marzoratti, Tosto - Marianini, Marchisio - Busce, Giacomazzi, Vannucchi - Saudati.

The Tuscan club were denied a place in last season's UEFA Cup because they had failed to apply for a UEFA licence. They had surprisingly received the chance to appear after the *Calciopoli* scandal punishments of other clubs had propelled them up Serie A, into the UEFA Cup placings. Last season they were seventh, their best finish, but their transfer market activity reflected their limited finances. They lost Sergio Almiron to Juventus, but signed Uruguayan Guillermo Giacomazzi as well as striker Rej Volpato, attacking midfielder Sebastian Giovinco from Juventus and young Milan midfielders Ignazio Abate and Luca Antonini. They also extended the loan period of Milan forward Nicola Pozzi and defender Felice Piccolo, and midfielder Claudio Marchisio from Juventus.

ERCIYESSPOR

COACH: Mehmet Bulut. Stepped in when Bulent Korkmaz left for Bursaspor at the end of last season.
KEY MAN: Ilhan Ozbay. Fast, technically-proficient right-sided midfielder with an eye for goal. The former Turkish Under-21 international used to play for Gaziantepspor.
LINE-UP: Yusuf - Huseyin, Kemal, Osman, Ramazan - Koksal, Adem, Kamil - Ilhan, Aydin - Burhan.

Last season was one of extremes, the club suffering relegation from the top flight but also qualifying for the UEFA Cup thanks to their status as domestic cup runners-up to Besiktas. Demotion caused an exodus of first-teamers, notably star striker Cenk Isler and Bulgarian winger Zdravko Lazarov. Bulut now faces the huge task of fusing a competitive side from a pool of big-city rejects and unknown quantities from the lower divisions.

EVERTON

COACH: David Moyes. Scot who has turned the club around since taking over in 2002.
KEY MAN: Mikel Arteta. The Spanish midfielder is Everton's main creative force.
LINE-UP: Howard - Hibbert, Yobo, Stubbs, Baines - Osman, Neville, Carsley, Arteta - Johnson, Anichebe.

It was another low-key summer in the transfer market. Moyes said: "We haven't had a great deal of money so our focus has been on what's in the local grocery store. It has paid off, but the numbers are dwindling and we have found it difficult to find English players." Phil Jagielka and Leighton Baines joined from Sheffield United and Wigan respectively, while more importantly, Arteta and Australian midfielder Tim Cahill agreed to stay on, with improved contracts. The loss of Cahill to injury, possibly until November, was a blow to Everton's European ambitions

FIORENTINA

COACH: Cesare Prandelli. Former Juventus midfielder who has been in charge since 2005.
KEY MAN: Adrian Mutu. The Romanian forward appears to have put his drugs problems behind him.
LINE-UP: Frey - Ujfalusi, Dainelli, Gamberini, Pasqual - Donadel, Montolivo - Santana, Mutu, Semioli - Pazzini.

The *Viola* finished sixth in Serie A last season despite starting with -15 points, a punishment for their part in the *Calciopoli* scandal. The big departure was Luca Toni to Bayern Munich. New signings were intriguing rather than outstanding – a mixture of promising youngsters (Belgian defender Anthony Vanden Borre, striker Arturo Lupoli from Arsenal) and hardened veterans (much-travelled striker Christian Vieri, from Atalanta).

FREDRIKSTAD

COACH: Anders Gronhagen. The Swede replaced the popular Knut T Eggen, who left after steering the club to cup success last year.
KEY MAN: Tarik Elyounoussi. Youngster with flair and technical skills who has been watched by a number of foreign clubs.
LINE-UP: Shaaban - Czwartek, Piiroja, Gerrbrand, Sjoberg - Bjorkoy, Gashi, Wehrman, Kvisvik - Elyounoussi, Johansson.

Gronhagen has succeeded in stabilising the 2006 Norwegian Cup winners, who had been struggling in the League. After some initial problems, the players adapted to his new 4-4-2 system. Experienced keeper Rami Shaaban is a regular in the Swedish national squad, central defender Raio Piiroja has the knack of scoring from set-pieces, and Raymond Kvisvik has an effective left foot. The arrival of Kasey Wehrman from Lillestrom and Ardian Gashi from Brann have added aggression to a midfield where John A Bjorkoy is a consistent performer.

GALATASARAY

COACH: Karl-Heinz Feldkamp. Seventy-three-year-old German just embarking on his second stint at the helm. Won the Turkish title with Galatasaray in 1993.
KEY MAN: Arda Turan. Attacking midfielder with a great range of flicks and tricks. Sensational on his day.
LINE-UP: Aykut - Sabri, Servet, Song, Ugur - Baris, Linderoth - Arda, Lincoln, Serkan - Hakan.

The fact Galatasaray persuaded a pensioner, Feldkamp, to return to full-time employment says everything about how desperate they were after failing to make the Champions League cut. The pairing of Arda with Brazilian new boy Lincoln (ex-Schalke) at the midfield controls is a mouthwatering prospect, while the signing of much underrated Swede Anders Linderoth from FC Copenhagen will give more grit to the engine room. But there are question marks over central defence and the ability of veteran striker Hakan Sukur to continue firing at the highest level.

GETAFE

COACH: Michael Laudrup. Legendary Danish player in his first foreign coaching post after success with Brondby.
KEY MAN: Ikechuwku Uche. Nigerian striker who did well at Recreativo last season.
LINE-UP: Abbondanzieri - Cortes, Belenguer, Cata Diaz, Licht - Pablo Hernandez, Celestini, Casquero, Nacho - Kepa, Uche.

Arda Turan, Galatasaray

Erik Nevland, Groningen

After the protracted departure of Bernd Schuster to Real Madrid, Getafe went for another young coach, Laudrup, as they looked ahead to their first European campaign. Getafe lost centre-back Alexis to Valencia and look a little on the light side. Summer signings included a new strikeforce in Kepa (Sevilla) and Uche, and another Argentinian goalkeeper in Oscar Ustari.

GROCLIN GRODZISK

COACH: Jacek Zielinski. Worked wonders last season at Odra Wodzislaw, rescuing them from relegation.
KEY MAN: Adrian Sikora. The team's main source of goals, a speedy striker who loves to run from deep.
LINE-UP: Przyrowski - Sokolowski, Mynar, Jodlowiec, Lazarevski - Piechniak, Muszalik, Majewski, Lato - Slusarski, Sikora.

The Polish Cup winners are based in the small town of Grodzisk, near Poznan, with a population of 12,000. They survive thanks to the support of Zbigniew Drzymala, the owner of Inter Groclin Auto, a local car accessories manufacturer. Last season they won both the domestic Cup and League Cup. But the overseer of this success, coach Maciej Skorza, left for Wisla Krakow in the summer. Powerful striker Bartosz Slusarski, back from a season-long loan at Uniao Leiria in Portugal, should strengthen the attack, if he can develop a partnership with Sikora.

GRONINGEN

COACH: Ron Jans. The former Groningen player has been coach since 2002.
KEY MAN: Erik Nevland. Norwegian striker who was once on the books of Manchester United.
LINE-UP: Van Loo - Silva, Sankoh, Kruiswijk, Stenman - Van de Laak, Lindgren, Levchenko, Lovre - Nevland, Berg.

Last season, Groningen finished eighth in the Dutch League, but won the domestic play-offs for UEFA Cup entry. The team have been hard to beat at home since moving to their new 20,000-capacity Euroborg stadium, also known as the Green Cathedral, in January 2006. Their European qualification helped persuade a number of key players to stay this summer, though defender Antoine Van der Linden left for Maritimo in Portugal and striker Luis Suarez for Ajax. The only notable signing has been Brazilian keeper Luciano from Belgium's Germinal Beerschot.

HACKEN

COACH: Sonny Karlsson. Named first-team boss last autumn after years in charge of the youth team.
KEY MAN: Dioh Williams. A promising Liberian forward who could follow the path of compatriot Jimmy Dixon (now with Malmo) to stardom at Hacken.
LINE-UP: Hysen - Lind, Heden, Forsell, Jarlegren - Henriksson, Risholt, Ljung, Skulason - Williams, Paulinho.

Hacken are one of Sweden's outstanding nursery clubs – they produced current Lyon star Kim Kallstrom – but have been unable to establish themselves in the top flight. They were relegated last season and don't look like bouncing back straight away. However, the one positive note was their fair play performance, which provided an unexpected entry to the UEFA Cup. Veteran World Cup forward Teddy Lucic has been hampered by injuries, but new Brazilian striker Paulinho could be a joker in the pack. Jonas Henriksson is an old hand in midfield, while Icelandic teenager Ari Skulason is a tip for the top.

HAJDUK SPLIT

COACH: Ivan Pudar. Ex-keeper whose teams usually play an attacking game.
KEY MAN: Florin Cernat. Romanian international on loan from Dynamo Kyiv.
LINE-UP: Balic - Zivkovic, Tudor, Sablic, Hrgovic - Verpakovskis, Damjanovic, Andric - Cernat - Kalinic, Rukavina.

Hajduk have lived in the shadow of great rivals Dinamo Zagreb for the past two seasons and are determined to reach the top in Croatia once again. Over the summer they signed two Croatian internationals, Igor Tudor and Goran Sablic, and also picked up players who have been out of favour at other clubs, such as Cernat and Latvian Maris Verpakovskis, also on loan from Dynamo Kyiv. In addition, Hajduk have two of Croatia's most talented young forwards, Nikola Kalinic and Ante Rukavina.

HAKA

COACH: Olli Huttunen. At the club for nearly 30 years, first as a highly-respected keeper.
KEY MAN: Valery Popovitch. At 37, still the inspiration of the team.
LINE-UP: Dovenya - Kangaskorpi, Okkonen, Parviainen, Holopainen - Manninen, Kauppila, Fowler, Innanen - Popovitch - Lehtinen.

Haka, who finished third in the Finnish League last year, are seasoned Euro campaigners, although they have made only modest progress in recent years. Their ambitions have been curbed by the fear of flying of Popovitch, while Huttunen has been criticised for his timid approach. Currently, Haka are doing better than expected in the League, with quick winger Mikko Innanen showing good form. Stopper Jarkko Okkonen and South African midfielder Cheyne Fowler offer physical power. Toni Lehtinen is a sturdy if somewhat inconsistent striker. But perhaps too much still rests on the ageing legs of "Czar" Popovitch.

Dioh Williams, Hacken (right)

Romeo Castelen, Hamburg (right)

HAMBURG

COACH: Huub Stevens. Outstanding Dutch boss who manages to combine toughness with a close relationship with his players. Guided Schalke to an unexpected UEFA Cup triumph in 1997.
KEY MAN: Rafael Van der Vaart. The ex-Ajax man's creativity and goals are Hamburg's lifeblood. Pity about the fragile physique.
LINE-UP: Rost - Demel, Kompany, Mathijsen, Atouba - Jarolim, De Jong, Castelen - Van der Vaart - Trochowski, Zidan.

There is optimism at the club thanks to an excellent second half of last season – when they finished seventh in the Bundesliga – the return to fitness of Belgian centre-back Vincent Kompany, and two quality signings – Dutch winger Romeo Castelen (Feyenoord) and Egyptian striker Mohamed Zidan (Mainz). A weak spot could be left-back, with Thimothee Atouba and Juan Pablo Sorin struggling with injuries. Hamburg came through the InterToto Cup.

HAMMARBY

COACH: Tony Gustavsson. Still only 33 but already making waves.
KEY MAN: Paulinho Guaran. Brazilian striker who made his name in Sweden with Orgryte.
LINE-UP: Lekstrom - Johansson, Traore, Monteiro, Gunnarsson - Laitinen, Chanko, Eguren, Zengier - Andersson, Paulinho.

After a disastrous close-season, during which Hammarby lost several first-team players, the team have done surprisingly well and still have an outside chance of winning the Swedish league title. They also came through the InterToto Cup, seeing off Dutch side Utrecht to secure a UEFA Cup berth. Hiring inexperienced coach Gustavsson was a gamble, but so far he has done little wrong. In midfield, Uruguayan Sebastian Eguren has run the show. Up front, big Peter Andersson and wily Paulinho Guaran form a useful duo. A hooligan element has tarnished Hammarby's image.

HAPOEL TEL AVIV

COACH: Guy Luzon. Arrived this summer from Maccabi Petach Tikva, a club owned by his extended family.
KEY MAN: Fabio Junior. One of three Brazilians signed over the summer.
LINE-UP: Enyema - Chen, Dos Santos, Duani, Bondar - Natkho, Srur, Badir, Dego - Assoulin, Fabio Junior.

Hapoel are the most experienced and most successful of Israel's three participants in this season's UEFA Cup. They reached the quarter-finals of the competition in 2002 and the group stage last season. There was a big clearout of players at the end of term, so this season's unit are an unknown force. Hapoel have a big advantage in that their Bloomfield stadium can be intimidating for visitors.

HEERENVEEN

COACH: Gertjan Verbeek. Former player who replaced Foppe De Haan as coach in 2004.
KEY MAN: Afonso Alves. Prolific Brazilian striker who was linked with a move away.
LINE-UP: Vandenbussche - Zuiverloon, Breuer, Dingsdag, Jong-a-Pin - Beerens, Prager, Pranjic, Bradley - Afonso Alves, Sulejman.

Heerenveen, who finished fifth in the league last season, are well liked in Holland because of their sophisticated but down-to-earth attitude. Despite the summer loss of key players Petter Hansson (to Rennes), Lasse Nilsson (Saint-Etienne) and Paul Bosvelt (retired), the club are confident they can repeat their good showing of last term. To compensate for the losses, Heerenveen signed striker Gerald Sibon (Nurnberg), defender Kristian Bak Nielsen (Midtjylland) and winger Roy Beerens (PSV), and were gambling that Afonso Alves would stay on.

HELSINGBORGS

COACH: Stuart Baxter. The Englishman is the most widely travelled coach in the Swedish game, with experience in Japan, Norway, England and South Africa.
KEY MAN: Henrik Larsson. Who else? Recently voted Sweden's best-ever footballer.
LINE-UP: D Andersson - Wahlstedt, Jakobsson, Beloufa, Tamboura - C Andersson, Dahl, Skulason, Svanback - Larsson, Omotoyossi.

Last year was memorable for Helsingborgs, with victory in the Swedish Cup Final, the return of Larsson and a new coach, Baxter. Since then the southerners have had difficulties and have hardly figured in the championship race. Larsson has done well, when he has actually played, and Helsingborgs have a crop of experienced players such as Erik Wahlstedt, Andreas Jakobsson and Christoffer Andersson. Midfielder Babis Stefanidis was sold to arch-rivals Malmo, to the chagrin of the fans. Benin international Razak Omotoyossi leads the club's African contingent.

HJK HELSINKI

COACH: Keith Armstrong. A lively Geordie who has dominated the Finnish League for the past decade.
KEY MAN: Dawda Bah. Clever 23-year-old Gambian forward.
LINE-UP: Wallen - Raitala, Halsti, Aho, Aalto - Nurmela, Medo, Savolainen, Bah - Vuorinen, Samura.

Finland's most successful club have not enjoyed their centenary year. They qualified for the UEFA Cup by winning last season's Finnish Cup, but their league form has fluctuated in 2007, with far too many draws. The fans seem to have grown tired of Armstrong, who hasn't been able to produce league titles in the way he did with previous club Haka. However, the new signings – forwards Hermanni Vuorinen and Dawda Bah, and Finnish international midfielder Tuomas Haapala – have been a plus. In the past, Armstrong's tactics in Europe have been ultra-cautious with little variety.

HONVED

COACH: Attila Supka. Made his name with Debrecen, by leading them to the league title in 2005 and 2006.

Aruna Dindane, Lens

Petar Zlatinov, Litex Lovech

KEY MAN: Abraham Guie Gneki. Strong, prolific Ivorian forward.
LINE-UP: Toth - Schindler, Pomper, Similjanic, Z Vincze - Dobos, Genito, Baranyos, Ivancsics - Hercegfalvi, Abraham.

The Cup holders are the team of the moment in Hungary having won their first four league games. Under the astute managership of Supka, Honved invested wisely in the summer, bringing back midfielder Zsolt Baranyos from Greece. Before the season began, pundits suggested Honved's weak spot would be the goalkeeper, but Ivan Toth was the hero of the penalty shoot-out triumph over Nistru Otaci of Moldova in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round.

JABLONEC

COACH: Lubos Kozel. Ex-defender who has a promising coaching career ahead of him. Previously in charge of Slavia Prague's reserves.
KEY MAN: Milan Fukal. Euro 2000 veteran who has added steel and experience to the back four.
LINE-UP: Spit - Fukal, Homola, Elias, Loucka - Baranek, Klapka, Kordula, Flachbart - Rilke, Zelenka.

Jablonec qualified for the UEFA Cup as losing finalists in the Czech Cup, having finished only in mid-table in the League. They are a solid outfit and generally hard to break down. Kozel took over from Teplice-bound Petr Rada in the summer, and much depends on how he adapts to the top flight. The retirement of midfielder Jozef Weber, to serve as Kozel's assistant, is a blow, but new striker Ludek Zelenka adds a new threat.

KAERJENG

COACH: Angelo Fiorucci. In charge for the past eight years, the Luxemburger with Italian roots has a day job in the financial sector.
KEY MAN: Matumba Kivunghe. Born in Congo but now a naturalised Belgian. The 34-year-old is effective either as a playmaker or in defence.
LINE-UP: Costa - Leite, Facques, Ramedovic, Matos - Rolandi, Da Costa - Kivunghe, Boulahrafi - Pace, Mateos.

The part-timers from Luxembourg enjoyed their finest hour when beating Lillestrom of Norway on away goals in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round. It was an amazing feat for a team from the village of Bascharage, which has a population of just 1,000. Qualified for the competition as beaten finalists in the Luxembourg Cup.

LARISA

COACH: Giorgios Donis. A flying winger in the Panathinaikos side that reached the semi-finals of the Champions League in 1996. In charge since 2004.
KEY MAN: Josef Kozlej. Intelligent Slovak striker who can sometimes seem a peripheral figure before suddenly resurfacing to tuck away a chance.
LINE-UP: Kotsolis - Kotsios, Dabizas, Venetidis - Galitsios, Kiriakidis - Fotakis, Cleiton, Iglesias - Sarmiento, Kozlej.

Larisa caused a sensation at the end of last season by defeating hot favourites Panathinaikos in the Greek Cup Final. They shopped for Argentinian talent this summer, bringing in midfielder Matias Iglesias (Atletico Madrid) and forwards Marcelo Sarmiento (Argentinos Juniors) and Facundo Parra (Chacarita Juniors). The team have a lot of experience at the back, with Greek Euro 2004 heroes Nikos Dabizas and Stylianos Venetidis.

LENS

COACH: Guy Roux. The French federation initially ruled that the former, long-serving Auxerre boss was too old at 68 to take over at the northern club. An appeal to the semi-governmental national sports committee brought a change of heart from the authorities.
KEY MAN: Aruna Dindane. Lens' top scorer last season. The Ivorian's pace, power, opportunism and willingness to work the flanks will again be vital.
LINE-UP: Runje - Aubey, Hilton, Coulibaly, Demont - Sable - Kovacevic, Monterrubio, Kalou - Akale, Dindane.

The sale of midfield motor Seydou Keita to Sevilla was a blow, but Lens found a decent replacement in Julien Sable from Saint-Etienne. It was no surprise that Roux opted to bring in players he once worked with at Auxerre: winger Kanga Akale and No 10 Bonaventure Kalou, who will be looking to relaunch his career following a less-than-convincing two-year stint at Paris Saint-Germain.

LITEX LOVECH

COACH: Ferario Spassov. Back at Lovech for a third spell. Won the League and Cup in his previous stints.
KEY MAN: Petar Zlatinov. Attacking midfielder with vision and technical ability.
LINE-UP: Todorov - R Popov, Nikolov, Uras, Venkov - Budaren, Sandrinyo, Manolev, Zlatinov - I Popov, Beto.

Lovech finished fourth in the Bulgarian League last term. That was not enough for the club's ambitious owner, Grisha Ganchev, who sacked Serbian coach Ljubo Petrovic. Some key players – Rossen Kirilov, Zhivko Zhelev, Peter Zanev – also left. In came a number of new signings, including three Frenchmen, headed by defender Cedric Uras from Falkirk. The club's priority this season is the domestic title, but a repeat of their UEFA Cup exploits of 2005-06, when they made it through the group stage, would not go amiss.

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW

COACH: Anatoli Byshovets. Experienced Ukraine-born coach who has led the national sides of the USSR, Russia and South Korea, as well as a number of Russian clubs.
KEY MAN: Peter Odemwingie. Russia-born Nigerian international striker signed from under the noses of Spartak Moscow from Lille.
LINE-UP: Pelizzoli - Ivanovic, Spahic, Asatiani, Yanbayev - Gurenko - Samedov, Odemwingie, Bilyaletdinov - Sychev, Traore.

Lokomotiv qualified for the UEFA Cup by winning the Russian Cup, a victory that eased the pressure on Byshovets. This summer, the coach continued his clearout of notable players that had begun with the departure of former international Vadim Evseev last year. Most controversially, charismatic team captain Dmitri Loskov left for Saturn while midfield prodigy Marat Izmailov went on loan to Sporting Lisbon and striker Gary O'Connor, scorer of the winning goal in the Cup Final, joined Birmingham.

LOKOMOTIV SOFIA

COACH: Stefan Grozdanov. One of Bulgaria's most experienced managers.
KEY MAN: Georgi Markov. The experienced defender had a reputation as a hard man but has cleaned up his act.
LINE-UP: Golubovic - Markov, Savic, Varbanov, Donchev - Dafchev, Karadzhinov - Koilov, Zlatinski - Baldovaliev, Antunovic.

Lokomotiv were the surprise team of the last Bulgarian championship as they finished third, their best performance since 1995. Striker Tsevetan Genkov left for Dinamo Moscow over the summer, but Zoran Baldovaliev and Hristo Zlatinski signed from Lokomotiv Plovdiv.

Zoran Baldovaliev, Lokomotiv Sofia

MACCABI NETANYA

COACH: Reuven Atar. Former Israeli international who took over in February 2004.
KEY MAN: Itai Shechter. Young striker whose goals were crucial last season.
LINE-UP: Strauber - Saban, Marin, Hermon, Ben Dayan - T Cohen, A Cohen - Taga, Bondea - Shechter, Ococha.

Last season's Israeli league runners-up are playing in a major European competition for the first time. They were a dominant force between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, when they were led by Israel's all-time great player, Mordechai Spiegler. Although Netanya are now under the ownership of millionaire businessman Daniel Jammer, they have not upgraded their squad, and Atar will have his work cut out to repeat last season's feats. The club are building a new stadium, but for now are playing in their old, compact ground in a residential area of the coastal city.

MACCABI TEL AVIV

COACH: Eli Cohen. Former Israeli international who steered Maccabi to a surprise third-place league finish last season.
KEY MAN: Avi Nimni. Veteran captain and midfielder in his 18th and possibly final season.
LINE-UP: Yavric - Shpungin, Yifrah, Martinovic, Messika - Yeini, Roman, Hadad, Nimni - Kamanan, Peretz.

Perennial underachievers, but they are one of only two Israeli clubs to have played in the group stage of the Champions League. Maccabi had a good spell in the middle of last season when it appeared as if they might pose a serious threat to eventual champions Beitar Jerusalem but they eventually faded. The club have a new goalkeeper, Montenegrin Dragoslav Yavric, but are otherwise pretty much unchanged. Nimni's leadership will once again be crucial. Maccabi share the Bloomfield stadium with arch-rivals Hapoel Tel Aviv.

MATTERSBURG

COACH: Franz Lederer. A great tactician who has total control over his team.
KEY MAN: Carsten Jancker. The ex-Bayern Munich star and Champions League winner has found his scoring touch again after a season of assimilation in Austria last term.
LINE-UP: Almer - Csizmadia, Sedloski, Mravac - Atan, Kuhbauer, Morz, Kovrig, Fuchs - Wagner, Jancker.

The smalltown club finished third in the Austrian League last season to qualify for the UEFA Cup. This season, they were still undefeated and leading the standings after six rounds. Lederer is not one for rotation, having fielded the same team in every game this season. His side have an unspectacular, but effective style.

METALIST KHARKIV

COACH: Miron Markevich. Former Karpaty Lviv boss who favours an attacking approach.
KEY MAN: Olexander Rykun. A lively and technically-gifted midfielder who missed the 2006 World Cup finals because of problems with alcoholism.
LINE-UP: Goryainov - Goncharzik, Obradovic, Guye - Devic, Slusar, Valyaev, Rykun, Danilav - Jakobia, Nwokha.

Metalist finished third in the Ukrainian League last term, their best performance, to qualify for Europe for the first time in 19 years. They have twice been relegated in the past 15 years, but have now found an exciting lease of life under Markevich, who also steered his hometown club Karpaty to a third-place finish. The team are inexperienced but the coach has some exciting options in attack, especially following the signing of Ivorian Venance Zeze on loan from Metalurh Donetsk. Other key players include captain and keeper Olexander Goryainov and Serbian wing-back Marko Devic.

Janne Korhonen, MyPa

METALURGS LIEPAJA

COACH: Benjaminus Zelkevicius. Sixty-three-year-old former coach of the Lithuanian national team. Once an outstanding striker with Zalgiris Vilnius.
KEY MAN: Girts Karlsons. Robust, mobile front man and a composed finisher. In his second spell following a period in Russia with Shinnik.
LINE-UP: Spole - Klava, Ferreira, Ivanovs, Zirnis - Miceika, Petkovics, Tamosauskas - Kalonas - Karlsons, Rubins.

Latvian league runners-up in 2006 and in contention to go one better this term. Can be very hard to break down, and they often threaten from set-pieces. When the midfield trio of Mindaugas Kalonas, Tomas Tamosauskas and Darius Miceika are on form, the team tend to do well. International winger Andrejs Rubins has joined on a six-month loan from Spartak Moscow.

MIDTJYLLAND

COACH: Erik Rasmussen. Unheralded Dane who worked for three years in the USA, returning home in 2001.
KEY MAN: Ajilore Oluwafemi. Immensely strong Nigerian who provides bite in midfield.
LINE-UP: Raska - Klimpl, Afriye, Troest, C Poulsen - Olsen, Oluwafemi, Thygesen, S Poulsen - Collins, Kristensen.

Midtjylland finished second in the Danish League last term and have made a fine start in the new campaign. They are a team without frills, but hard to beat, and with a possible joker in the pack in striker Baba Collins.

MIKA ASHTARAK

COACH: Arkady Andreasyan. Legendary Armenian midfielder whose claims to fame were helping Ararat Yerevan win the USSR League in 1973 and playing in the

Andrejs Rubins, Metalurgs Liepaja

Soviet side that took bronze at the 1972 Olympics. Went on to coach Ararat.
KEY MAN: Armen Shakhgeldyan. Veteran striker who is still potent in the box. Has won 53 caps for Armenia and played for clubs in Israel, Switzerland, Greece and the Gulf.
LINE-UP: Hakopyan - Petikyan, Fursin, Ristic - Cleber, De Souza, Antonyan, Glever - Alex - Shakhgeldyan, Adamyan.

MIKA's owner, businessman Michael Bahgdasarov, is hugely ambitious and not known for his patience. So it was no surprise in May when he reacted to a sequence of poor results by firing coach Armen Adamyan and appointing hard-nosed Andreasyan. Defensively, the team reflects the new boss's no-nonsense approach. The midfield relies heavily on Brazilians Cleber and Alex.

MLADA BOLESLAV

COACH: Ludek Zajic. Appointed in the summer. The 46-year-old was previously a scout and assistant coach at the club, and head coach at Hradec Kralove and Lazne Bohdanec.
KEY MAN: Petr Vorisek. The tough ex-international midfielder, on loan from Sparta Prague, brings experience and resolve to a team in flux.
LINE-UP: Miller - Sevinsky, Rajnoch, Kopic, Hrdlicka - Sedlacek, Matejovsky, Vorisek, Kalina - Kysela, Taborsky.

The central Bohemian club are paying the price for two seasons of success, which peaked with last season's memorable UEFA Cup win over Marseille. Romanian side Politehnica Timisoara lured away inspirational coach Dusan Uhrin Junior, speedy forward Marek Kulic joined Sparta Prague in January, and striker Lubos Pecka departed for German second division side Alemannia Aachen in the summer.

Zvjezdan Misimovic, Nurnberg

Matching Uhrin's achievements could be a tall order for Zajic, and Pecka, the Czech League's leading scorer last season, will be particularly hard to replace. Ivo Taborsky, signed from Ceske Budejovice, could help fill the void.

MYPA

COACH: Janne Hypponen. Promoted from the assistant's post to replace Ilkka Makela. Previously coached Kotka, MyPa's arch-rivals.
KEY MAN: Janne Korhonen. A big, strong goalkeeper with sharp reflexes.
LINE-UP: Korhonen - Huttunen, Pulkkinen, Miranda, Kansikas - Muinonen, Agboh, Fofana, Kuparinen - Puhakainen, Hyyrynen.

MyPa hit a poor patch just before their UEFA Cup second qualifying round tie against Blackburn, prompting coach Ilkka Makela to resign. MyPa have been one of Finland's leading lights since the early 1990s, but it was Makela who steered them to their first league title in 2005. The line-up includes Paraguayan stopper Hugo Miranda and midfielder Kuami Agboh, who played for Togo in the 2006 World Cup. Scoring has been MyPa's main concern recently, with veteran Saku Puhakainen a mere shadow of his former self.

NURNBERG

COACH: Hans Meyer. Wily old tactician who worked for 25 years in East Germany before heading west.
KEY MAN: Zvjezdan Misimovic. The Bosnian playmaker did not make the grade at Bayern but went from strength to strength at Bochum and was snapped up by Nurnberg this summer.
LINE-UP: Klewer - Reinhardt, Wolf, Glauber, Pinola - Galasek, Engelhardt, Misimovic - Vittek - Haristeas, Saenko.

No team in Germany has improved more than Nurnberg over the past 18 months. Last season was a vintage one, winning the German Cup and finishing a good sixth in the Bundesliga. Their biggest assets? Their outstanding pressing game and tight back four. They might have a problem in goal following the departure to Stuttgart of Raphael Schafer, with neither Czech newcomer Jaromir Blazek or Daniel Klewer looking particularly convincing.

OB ODENSE

COACH: Lars Olsen. Former Denmark captain who lifted the 1992 European Championship. Newly arrived from Randers.
KEY MAN: Mads Timm. Scoring goals again after troubles as a junior at Manchester United.

Mads Timm, OB Odense

LINE-UP: Onyskko - Helveg, Moller Christensen, Laursen, Sorensen - Bolanos, Hansen, Oliveira, Borring - Timm, Absalonsen.

The club had a good 2006-07, winning the Danish Cup and nearly qualifying from their UEFA Cup group. Olsen has acquired skilful Costa Rican Christian Bolanos but generally appears happy with the settled side he inherited from Bruce Rioch. Unbeaten in the League after five matches.

OMONIA NICOSIA

COACH: Dragomir Okuka. Serb previously in charge at Velez Mostar, Obilic Belgrade, Legia Warsaw and Wisla Krakow. Arrived in June 2006.
KEY MAN: Musa Mguni. Towering Zimbabwean striker signed from Motor Action two years ago.
LINE-UP: Giorgalidis - Veiga, Konnafis, Kakoyiannis, Georgiou - Korolovsky, Kaiafas, Ricardo Sousa - Guilherme, Mguni, Ba.

The Cypriot club are building a new stadium and it could soon have a side to grace it. Omonia look particularly strong in midfield, where they have new Portuguese signing Ricardo Sousa and Costas Kaiafas. Both come from footballing families. Sousa's father Antonio starred for Portugal and Porto; Kaiafas' dad Sotiris won the European Golden Boot.

OTELUL GALATI

COACH: Petre Grigoras. Appointed by the club's new owners, the Mittal Steel corporation.
KEY MAN: Gabriel Jula. Otelul's top scorer in 2006-07.
LINE-UP: Kouha - Gado, Sirghi, Nogo, Semeghin - Labukas, Giurgiu, Kim, Ilie - Paraschiv - Jula.

Until recently, Otelul Galati were a mid-table team, but after investment from Mittal Steel they are now on the rise. They finished fourth in the Romanian League last season and qualified for the UEFA Cup by beating Turkish side Trabzonspor 4-2 on aggregate in the InterToto Cup. Their stadium was rebuilt last year as the first step of the club's ambitious plans for the future. Two important summer signings were Moroccan goalkeeper Ismail Kouha, from Raja Casablanca – to replace Steaua Bucharest-bound Andrei Vatca – and Bulgarian defender Zivko Jelev from Litex Lovech.

PACOS FERREIRA

COACH: Jose Mota. A tough cookie who gets results from his players.
KEY MAN: Edson. Takes the lone striker role in the 4-5-1 formation.
LINE-UP: Pecanha - Ferreira, Kiko, Luiz Carlos, Antunes - Marcio Carioca, Anunciacao, Dede, Fernando Pilar, Cristiano - Edson.

The club from northern Portugal qualified for European competition for the first time after finishing sixth in the domestic league, their highest placing. Pacos were able to hold on to promising wing-back Antunes, who had been linked with Portugal's top clubs over the summer, and brought in forward Jose Furtado, who had an excellent scoring record in Bulgaria.

Giorgos Karagounis, Panathinaikos

PALERMO

COACH: Stefano Colantuono. Joined from Atalanta this summer having previously been in charge of another Sicilian side, Catania, in 2003-04.
KEY MAN: Fabrizio Miccoli. Much-travelled Italian striker who spent two seasons in Portugal with Benfica.
LINE-UP: Fontana - Zaccardo, Barzagli, Rinaudo, Pisano - Diana, Guana, Simplicio, Jankovic - Miccoli, Amauri.

There were plenty of changes at Palermo over the summer, including Colantuono replacing Francesco Guidolin. Miccoli was the big-name signing, joining from Juventus after two years on loan at Benfica. Also arriving were highly-rated Serbian midfield schemer Bosko Jankovic, one of the stars of this summer's European Under-21 Championship, and Atalanta midfielder Giulio Migliaccio. Palermo finished fifth in Serie A last season, their best performance. They exited at the group stage of the UEFA Cup, having beaten West Ham in the first round.

PANATHINAIKOS

COACH: Jose Peseiro. Ex-Sporting Lisbon boss who spent last season in charge of Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal.
KEY MAN: Giorgos Karagounis. Greek international midfielder who returned to Athens in the summer.
LINE-UP: Malarz - Nilsson, Goumas, Enakarhire, Seric - Ninis, Mattos, Karagounis, Ivanschitz - Salpigidis, Papadopoulos.

Panathinaikos last won silverware in 2004, when they did the Greek Double. Last season, defeat to Larisa in the Cup Final signalled the end for Spanish coach Victor Munoz. He was replaced by Peseiro, who made a number of signings over the summer. Most important was Euro 2004 star Karagounis after spells at Internazionale and Benfica. Pana also agreed a one-year loan deal with Dinamo Moscow for Nigerian defender Joseph Enakarhire, while Brazilian midfielder Marcelo Mattos joined from Corinthians. "Panathinaikos have fine players. But with Karagounis, we'll become an even stronger team," Peseiro said. Also worth looking out for is highly-rated teenager Sotiris Ninis.

PANIONIOS

COACH: Ewald Lienen. Academic-type German boss previously with Duisburg, Hansa Rostock, Monchengladbach, Hannover, Koln and Tenerife. Won the UEFA Cup in 1979 as a winger with Gladbach.
KEY MAN: Fanouris Goundoulakis. Clever attacking midfielder who can score as well as create.
LINE-UP: Koenig - Tskitishvili, Pletsch, Maniatis, Spiropoulos - Makos, Aravidis, Delura, Goundoulakis - Bennard, Djebbour.

The club, who finished fifth in the Greek League last term, may be indulging in wishful thinking when they talk of challenging the country's big three (AEK Athens, Olympiakos and Panathinaikos). But the Panthers do not lack ambition. Their summer signings underlined the point, bringing in German midfielder Michael Delura (Schalke), exciting Ghanaian attacking midfielder Bennard Yao Kumordzi (Aigaleo) and Croatian striker Ivica Majstorovic (Unterhaching).

RABOTNICKI KOMETAL

COACH: Dragoljub Bekvalac. Studious Serb who pays particular attention to physical preparation.
KEY MAN: Stojance Ignatov. International midfielder who is a superb passer and has a powerful shot from distance.
LINE-UP: Madzovski - Bozinovski, Kovacevic, Vajs, Lazarevski - Demiri, Ignatov, Nedzipi - Trickovski - Velkovski, Pejcic.

Last season, the Macedonians reached the third qualifying round of the Champions League but did not manage to win the domestic league title, finishing runners-up to Pobeda. That prompted Bekvalac to get rid of 10 players and bring in a whole new selection. The pick of them is midfielder Ertan Demiri from Vardar.

RAPID BUCHAREST

COACH: Cristian Bergodi. Italian who puts the emphasis on strong defence and a counter-attacking style.
KEY MAN: Marius Maldarasanu. Experienced midfielder and the team's leader on the pitch.
LINE-UP: Coman - Sapunaru, Maftei, M Constantin, Bozovici - E Dica, Maldarasanu, Grigorie - Cesinha, Mazilu, Buga.

Rapid qualified for the UEFA Cup by winning the Romanian Cup but finished a poor fourth in the League. Razvan Lucescu paid the price for that failure, with Bergodi coming in as his replacement. The expectations of owner George Copos are still just as high, putting coach and squad under pressure. A host of new players arrived over the summer, the most important of which were Brazil's Cesinha and Pierre Boya of Cameroon.

RAPID WIEN

COACH: Peter Pacult. The former international proved his coaching skill in Germany.
KEY MAN: Steffen Hofmann. Midfielder who is Rapid's heart and soul. He is equally adept at tackling as passing. Also a free-kick specialist.
LINE-UP: Payer - Hiden, Tokic, Patocka, Katzer - Hofmann, Heikkinen, Umit, Kavlak - Bilic, Bazina.

Austria's record champions had a poor league campaign in 2006-07, finishing only fourth, 24 points behind champions Salzburg. Rapid grabbed the lifeline of the InterToto Cup, going on to qualify for the UEFA Cup. Pacult, who took over last September, oversaw a number of summer transfers. These included Mario Tokic and Jurgen Patocka, who should help to stabilise the defence

RENNES

COACH: Pierre Dreossi. Former Lille and Rennes general manager who agreed to take charge of Rennes' first team after Romanian Laszlo Boloni left for Monaco a year ago.
KEY MAN: Mickael Pagis. A proven goalscorer in French football and has a point to prove after being pushed aside at Marseille mid-way through last season to make way for the fit-again Djibril Cisse.
LINE-UP: Pouplin - Fanni, Hansson, Mensah, Edman - Didot, Cheyrou, Leroy, Thomert - Briand, Pagis.

The Bretons are still sore about missing out on Champions League qualification by a single point last season. They were pipped to third place in the French League by Toulouse, who had controversially been awarded three points when Nantes fans forced the abandonment of their penultimate game of the season with the score at 0-0. A worry for Rennes is the number of first-choice defenders who have jumped

Marius Maldarasanu, Rapid Bucharest (left)

Alvaro Saborio, Sion

ship: Mario Melchiot (Wigan), Jacques Faty (Marseille) and Gregory Bourillon (Paris Saint-Germain).

RIED

COACH: Helmut Kraft. The quiet tactician is possibly the most underrated coach in the Austrian top division.
KEY MAN: Herwig Drechsel. Veteran playmaker who is nearly always at the heart of Ried's dangerous moves.
LINE-UP: Berger - Brenner, Glasner, Jank, Rzasa - Hackmair, Toth, Pichorner, Drechsel, Erbek - Damjanovic.

Ried, the surprise runners-up in the Austrian League last season, face a struggle to repeat their achievement. They lost a number of key players over the summer and their squad does not have the depth to cope with both domestic and European campaigns.

SAMPDORIA

COACH: Walter Mazzarri. Joined Samp this summer after working miracles with Reggina last season, keeping them in Serie A despite an 11-point penalty for their part in the *Calciopoli* scandal.
KEY MAN: Antonio Cassano. The troubled son of Italian football is back in his homeland after a disappointing spell at Real Madrid.
LINE-UP: Castellazzi - Lucchini, Sala, Accardi - Maggio, Palombo, Volpi, Ziegler - Cassano, Bellucci - Montella.

Samp finished ninth in Serie A last season, qualifying for the UEFA Cup via the InterToto Cup. In the summer they lost highly-rated striker Fabio Quagliarella to Udinese but pulled off a coup by securing the loan of Cassano. He joins experienced striker Vincenzo Montella, who returned to the club where he made his name.

SION

COACH: Alberto Bigon. Former Milan striker who later coached Diego Maradona's Napoli to the Serie A title in 1990. In his second spell at Sion.
KEY MAN: Alvaro Saborio. The Costa Rican striker has adapted well to European football following a post-2006 World Cup move from Deportivo Saprissa.
LINE-UP: Vailati - Alioui, Nwaneri, Kali, Buhler - Beto, Chedli, Paito, Obradovic - Dominguez, Saborio.

After several years of debt and second division football, the club from the Valais region of western Switzerland are back in the top flight and flourishing. Third last term, they used some of the £3.9m they received from Manchester City for young midfielder Gelson Fernandes to sign Colombian attacking midfielder Alvaro Jose Dominguez (Deportivo Cali), left-sided Mozambican international Paito (Braga) and ex-Benfica enforcer Beto.

SIROKI BRIJEG

COACH: Ivica Barbaric. Wily veteran who is an excellent motivator and whose teams never give up.
KEY MAN: Ronielle Faria Gomes. Brazilian midfielder with excellent technique and an eye for goal.
LINE-UP: Vasilj - Ricardo Costa, Vidic, Topic, Silic - Zelenika, M Juric, Ronielle, Marciano - Karoglan - S Bubalo.

Siroki lost the Bosnian league title to Sarajevo last season and had to settle for a consolation victory in the Cup Final. The club's ambitious president, Mijo Jelic, secured several playing reinforcements over the summer, notably Marciano, the Brazilian who was the best player in the Bosnian League last season with Sarajevo. Stanko Bubalo returned home from Kartnen (Austria). Other signings included Velimir Vidic (Zrinjski) and Marko Juric (Istra, Croatia).

SLAVEN BELUPO

COACH: Krunoslav Jurcic. The ambitious young manager was a member of Croatia's 1998 World Cup squad.
KEY MAN: Bojan Vrucina. Highly-rated young centre-forward.
LINE-UP: Ivesa - Bosnjak, Radeljic, Kristic, Poldrugac - Juric, Posavec, Sopic, Caval - Sehic, Vrucina.

Slaven qualified for the UEFA Cup for the first time by reaching the Croatian Cup Final, which they lost to champions Dinamo Zagreb. The club from Koprivnica didn't make too many changes over the summer, with goalkeeper Jane Nikolovski the only notable departee. The team are well-organised and have dangerous forwards, while Srebrenko Posavec is a talented playmaker.

SOCHAUX

COACH: Frederic Hantz. Well-regarded ex-Le Mans boss brought in to replace the Lyon-bound Alain Perrin.
KEY MAN: Teddy Richert. Veteran former Toulouse, Bordeaux and Lille keeper in the form of his life last term.
LINE-UP: Richert - Drame, N'Daw, Afolabi, Pichot - Pitau, Sene, Dalmat, Birsa, Grax - Alvaro Santos.

The French Cup holders are in a transition period after losing their two most creative players – Karim Ziani (Marseille) and Jerome Leroy (Rennes) – in the close season. They have gambled on playmaker Stephane Dalmat, who has had clubs galore in France, Italy and England without ever convincing. But as usual they will be largely dependent on graduates from their prolific academy.

SPORTING BRAGA

COACH: Jorge Costa. Former international central defender who won the Champions League with Porto in 2004. Took over in February.
KEY MAN: Joao Pinto. Veteran Portugal forward.
LINE-UP: Paulo Santos - Joao Pereira, Paulo Jorge, Frechaut, Cesar Peixoto - Vandinho, Andres Madrid, Roberto Brum, Wender - Joao Tomas, Joao Pinto.

In his first full season as coach, Jorge Costa will be looking for at least a repeat of last season's achievements of fourth in the Portuguese League and the last 16 of the UEFA Cup. He still has veteran Joao Pinto to count on, and two new players – forward Joao Tomas and winger/full-back Cesar Peixoto – will make an immediate impact. Braga are solid in all departments and should prove to be tough adversaries, especially when playing at home.

STANDARD LIEGE

COACH: Michel Preud'homme. Legendary former Belgium, Standard, Mechelen and Benfica goalkeeper who took charge in August 2006.
KEY MAN: Marouane Fellaini. All-action young Belgian international midfielder of Moroccan stock. Has been linked to a number of Premiership clubs, including Tottenham.
LINE-UP: Renard - Marcos, Onyewu, Sarr, Dante - Witsel, Fellaini, Defour, Toama - Jovanovic, De Camargo.

A team full of young talent – especially in midfield, where skipper Steven Defour, Axel Witsel and Fellaini are prominent. Standard are not far from becoming a genuine force in Belgium; a touch more consistency would be welcome. A possible problem is their starlets being distracted by transfer talk. Qualified for the UEFA Cup after a third-place league finish.

Salim Toama, Standard Liege (right)

SUDUVA

COACH: Algimantas Gabrys. The long-serving boss is renowned for his organisational skills.
KEY MAN: Saulius Klevinskas. Talented, 23-year-old, homegrown keeper who is now second choice for the Lithuanian national team.
LINE-UP: Klevinskas - Sobal, Skinderis, Klimavicius, Mikuckis - Kerys, Miklinevicius, Jasaitis, Maciulevicius - Urbys, Braga.

Last year's Lithuanian Cup winners have fallen away in the current league championship. Suduva are set up very compactly and can be tough to break down. But they still lack attacking flair, despite having Brazilian striker Braga and Lithuanian international midfielder Darius Maciulevicius.

TOBOLKOSTANAY

COACH: Dmitri Ogai. Forty-six-year-old ex-Irtysh boss with a Lobanovskyi-like distaste for showing emotion and a penchant for military language.
KEY MAN: Nurbol Zhumaskaliyev. The captain of both Tobol and Kazakhstan. The diminutive attacking midfielder is the best player in the country by some distance, inventive, precise and bursting with vitality.
LINE-UP: Prydkin - Nurgaliev, Irismetov, Muhanov, Dimitrov - Nurdauletov - Yurin, Baltiev - Zhumaskaliyev - Skorykh, Bakaev.

The Kazakhs performed well above expectations by emerging from the InterToto Cup, beating Czech side Slovan Liberec and Greece's OFI Crete on the way. They have a muscular defensive unit, and the team show no little tactical sophistication. Not to be underestimated.

TOTTENHAM

COACH: Martin Jol. The Dutchman has led Spurs to a fifth-place Premier League finish two seasons running.
KEY MAN: Dimitar Berbatov. Bulgarian striker who was Spurs' top scorer last season.

Dimitar Berbatov, Tottenham

Morten Berre, Valerenga (In blue)

LINE-UP: Robinson - Chimbonda, King, Dawson, Bale - Keane, Jenas, Zakora, Malbranque - Berbatov, Bent.

Preparations for the UEFA Cup campaign were overshadowed by speculation about Jol's future. The Dutchman spent heavily in the transfer market this summer, including £16.5m on striker Darren Bent, whose arrival is likely to edge England striker Jermain Defoe out of the starting line-up. However, certain figures at the club had reservations about the manager's ability to turn Spurs into genuine challengers for one of the four Champions League places. Spurs' run in last season's UEFA Cup was ended at the quarter-final stage by eventual winners Sevilla, whose coach, Juande Ramos, has been touted as a replacement for Jol.

TWENTE ENSCHEDE

COACH: Fred Rutten. Former Twente player who is in his second coaching spell at the club.
KEY MAN: Karim El Ahmadi. Attack-minded midfielder who blossomed last season with some magnificent performances.
LINE-UP: Boschker - Wilkshire, Wielaert, Braafheid, Heubach - El Ahmadi, Schreuder, Engelaar - Denneboom, N'Kufo, Huysegems.

Twente finished fourth in the Dutch League last season but Rutten is reluctant to suggest that his team can break into the country's perceived top four (PSV, Ajax, Feyenoord and AZ). "They are untouchable," he says. "We are part of the group called best of the rest." In fact, Twente are paying the price for their success last season. Several key players left the club over the summer. Midfielders Ismail Aisatti and Otmal Bakkal returned to PSV after a loan spell, and wingers Kennedy Bakircioglu (Ajax) and Sharbel Touma (Monchengladbach) also moved on. On top of that, Rutten has to do without his highly-regarded assistant, Rene Eijkelkamp, who quit.

UNIAO LEIRIA

COACH: Victor Pontes. Assistant to Jose Mourinho at Leiria before taking the top job himself.
KEY MAN: Tonito. Spanish forward signed from Rijeka this summer.
LINE-UP: Fernando - Eder, Alhandra, Renato, Laranjeiro - Eder Gaucho, Faria, Marco - Paulo Cesar, Modou Sougou, Tonito.

Leiria finished seventh in the Portuguese League last season to gain entry to the InterToto Cup. They staged a dramatic comeback to beat Serbian side Hajduk Kula in that competition to reach the UEFA Cup.

VALERENGA

COACH: Harald Aabrekk. Took over this summer when Petter Myhre stepped down. Previously in charge of Tromso and Brann, and also worked as assistant national coach.
KEY MAN: Ronny Johnsen. The 38-year-old defender/midfielder's form earned him an international recall. Previous clubs include Besiktas, Manchester United and Aston Villa.
LINE-UP: Arason - Storbaek, Waehler, Thomassen, Jepsen - Johnsen, Mila, Jalland, Dos Santos - Berre, Holm.

Valerenga won the Norwegian League in 2005 but things turned sour last year as coach Kjetil Rekdal left and star forward Steffen Iversen chose to return to rivals Rosenborg. The team have struggled this term, not least because they have lacked a natural goalscorer. Daniel Holm is talented but struggles in front of goal, while Rune Lange has suffered another serious injury. Danish defender Dan Thomassen was bought from FC Copenhagen and midfielder

Jorgen Jalland brought back from Russian football. Icelandic keeper Arni Arason performs with authority in a defence that concedes few goals.

VILLARREAL

COACH: Manuel Pellegrini. Chilean who has been in charge since 2004.
KEY MAN: Jon Dahl Tomasson. Much-travelled Danish forward with the task of filling Diego Forlan's shoes.
LINE-UP: Diego Lopez - Josemi, Fuentes, Godin, De la Bella - Cazorla, Senna, Fernandez, Pires - Tomasson, Franco.

Villarreal showed last season that they could live without Juan Roman Riquelme – who has now returned from a loan spell at Boca Juniors – but can they live without Diego Forlan? The Uruguayan was sold to Atletico Madrid for £14m, with Tomasson brought in to replace him. Other new arrivals were French midfielder Rio Mavuba (Bordeaux), Uruguayan defender Diego Godin (Nacional) and young America-born Italian striker Giuseppe Rossi (Manchester United). Relations between Pellegrini and Riquelme remain strained and there appears no way back into the side for the talented Argentinian, especially since Chilean Matias Fernandez has adapted well to European football.

VOJVODINA NOVI SAD

COACH: Milovan Rajevac. Former Red Star Belgrade defender who took over in 2006. Had a short spell in charge of Red Star in 2004 and has also worked at Borac Cacak and Zeleznik Belgrade.
KEY MAN: Ranko Despotovic. One of the best forwards in Serbia's top flight. Scored 17 league goals last season, and four against Hibernians of Malta in this season's UEFA Cup first qualifying round.
LINE-UP: Kahriman - Nastic, Pekaric, Djuric, Kizito - Kacar, Popovic - Buac, Markovic, Tadic - Despotovic.

In the past few years, Vojvodina, who won two league titles in the former Yugoslav League, were tipped to become the third force in Serbian football, behind Red Star and Partizan Belgrade. But they struggled to live up to their billing, mainly because of poor management. A change for the better came after local businessman Ratko Butorovic took over. Last season Vojvodina played good football, finished third in the League and reached the Cup Final. In the build-up to the new season, Butorovic made it clear that no Vojvodina player would be sold to Red Star or Partizan.

YOUNG BOYS

COACH: Martin Andermatt. The former boss of Winterthur, Baden and Wil in Switzerland, Ulm and Eintracht Frankfurt in Germany, and the Liechtenstein national team. Took charge of Young Boys in October 2006.
KEY MAN: Hakan Yakin. Although he can be erratic, the Swiss-Turk playmaker remains a potential match-winner with his vision, range of passing and free-kicks.
LINE-UP: Wolfi - Schwegler, Tiago, Zayatte, Raimondi - Varela, Yapi Yapo, Regazzoni - Mangane, Yakin - Joao Paulo.

Which team will turn up in Europe? The one that thrashed Basle 5-1 in a Swiss league game? Or the one that looked so unconvincing in a 3-1 loss to Neuchatel Xamax the following weekend. The Young Boys line-up combines Swiss vigour and Latin American pizazz (the Brazilian striker Joao Paulo especially). The long throws of full-back Christian Schwegler can be a big weapon. The artificial pitch at the Stade de Suisse is another advantage for the team.

Hakan Yakin, Young Boys

ZARAGOZA

COACH: Victor Fernandez. Back at the club where he won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1995.
KEY MAN: Andres D'Alessandro. Talented Argentinian midfielder.
LINE-UP: Lopez Vallejo - Diogo, Sergio Fernandez, Ayala, Juanfran - Aimar, Zapater, Matuzalem, D'Alessandro - Milito, Ricardo Oliveira.

Zaragoza, with heavy Argentinian influence in the form of D'Alessandro, the Milito brothers and Pablo Aimar, played some of the best football in La Liga last season. Gabriel Milito was sold to Barcelona but the club have spent the £14m fee well, bringing in former Valencia defender Roberto Ayala and Brazilian midfielder Matuzalem, and adding extra firepower with former Betis striker Ricardo Oliveira, on loan from Milan. Further progress is expected.

ZENIT ST PETERSBURG

COACH: Dick Advocaat. Hugely experienced Dutchman, nicknamed The Little General (his mentor, Rinus Michels, was known as The General). Has been in charge of Zenit since July 2006.
KEY MAN: Andrei Arshavin. The Russian national team captain (though not Zenit's) is the key figure in midfield. Voted the Russian League's most valuable player in 2006.
LINE-UP: Malafeev - Anyukov, Hagen, Lombaerts, Kim - Tymoshchuk, Radimov - Arshavin, Zyryanov, Dominguez - Pogrebnyak.

Russia's richest club – thanks to investment from powerful energy company Gazprom – are a rising force in the domestic game. Last year they lost striker Alexander Kerzhakov to Sevilla, but they more than made up for his loss with a series of buys. Russian international and ex-Spartak Moscow forward Pavel Pogrebnyak (from Tom Tomsk), Argentinian playmaker Alejandro Dominguez (Rubin Kazan) and experienced international midfielder Konstantin Zyryanov (Torpedo Moscow) joined record signing Anatoliy Tymoshchuk, a £10m buy from Shakhtar Donetsk. The signings helped make Zenit this season's league favourites, but little of Gazprom's cash had been used to reinforce the defence, and Zenit were lagging behind Spartak after 20 rounds of the campaign.

ZLATE MORAVCE

COACH: Jan Rosinsky. Thoughtful, demanding boss known for his motivational skills and clever strategy.
KEY MAN: Milos Gibala. Young, promising front-runner who scored twice in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round defeat of Almaty.
LINE-UP: Peskovic - Pavlenda, Klabal, Greguska, Ciz - Ondrejka, Choma - Hozl, Kuracka, Juska - Gibala.

These are heady times for the 12-year-old club from western Slovakia. Last season they not only triumphed in the national Cup, but they also won promotion to the top division for the first time. True, they were thumped 5-0 by Artmedia Bratislava in their opening top-flight game, but they have since steadied the ship.

Andrei Arshavin, Zenit St Petersburg

ZRINJSKI

COACH: Blaz Sliskovic. Ex Bosnia-Herzegovina national coach. An excellent tactician with a reputation for getting his teams to play attractive football.
KEY MAN: Zoran Rajovic. All-time top scorer in the Bosnian League with 54 goals.
LINE-UP: Maric - Nikolic, D Dzidic, I Dzidic, Zurzinov - Pezo - Smajic, Landeka, Zizovic - Rajovic, Selimovic.

Gained entry to the UEFA Cup by finishing runners-up in the Bosnian League. But they made it into the second qualifying round only because their first round opponents, Partizan Belgrade, who won 11-1 on aggregate, were disqualified because of their fans' hooliganism on the day of the first leg in Mostar. Not even Sliskovic was confident of his team making further progress, joking that UEFA might as well throw Zrinjski out as well as Partizan. ●

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GERMANY

Low on a high

Jurgen Klinsmann's replacement as national team boss has continued the good work. Nick Bidwell reports

GERMAN PLAYERS were not simply looking to keep up their spirits when, after losing to Italy in the World Cup semi-finals, they spoke of becoming the next European champions. Undefeated and sitting pretty atop Euro 2008 qualifying Group D, the *Nationalmannschaft* seem certain to figure among the favourites for the crown, especially as the finals will be so close to home, in Austria and Switzerland.

Those inclined to categorise Germany's World Cup campaign on home soil as a one-off fuelled by patriotic fervour and helped by the familiar surroundings have been forced to revise their opinions. Apart from a 1-1 draw in Cyprus, the Germans have not put a foot wrong in the past 12 months, winning all their other six qualifiers, including ties in Slovakia (4-1) and the Czech Republic (2-1).

Arguably, the team's style has been even more impressive than the results. In the past, Germany were often content to win ugly, wearing down the opposition before applying the *coup de grace*. However, Jurgen Klinsmann introduced a new, positive philosophy when taking the coaching reins in 2004. Firstly, he dictated terms – that his team should play with speed, creativity and enthusiasm – rather than coldly wait for the opposition to make a mistake.

Wisely, Klinsmann's successor, his former No 2 Joachim Low, has stuck to the same policy. "We must not go back to those days of over-reliance on our traditional German virtues. That's obvious. Players from San Marino can run around and fight too. We've made significant progress in the past three years. I feel we're back now on a par with the big European sides such as Italy, France, Portugal and England. But no one can say we're the best in Europe. We still have a lot more to do in certain areas: scouting, the way we produce coaches, youth development, the use of technology."

Czech mate...Germany celebrate on their way to victory in Prague

Low's appointment as *Bundestrainer* did not initially meet with universal approval. Many thought the role of trusty lieutenant was the limit of his capabilities, that the ex-Stuttgart and Austria Wien boss lacked the charisma and top-level experience to step into the shoes of Klinsmann. How wrong. Thanks to his flair for organisation – particularly in tightening up the back-line – innovative methods and finely-tuned communication skills, the 47-year-old has impressed.

Close-knit squad

Banging his fist on the dressing room table is just not Low's way. He looks for consensus and to convince his players through the power of argument. And in such a collegial atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that Germany have the most close-knit squad for years. Long gone are the days when club cliques and personal agendas made harmony nigh on impossible. Low certainly needed to be adaptable in 2006-07: injuries to key men (notably midfielders Michael Ballack and Tim Borowski, defenders Christoph Metzelder, Per Mertesacker and Arne Friedrich, and striker Lukas Podolski) meant constant rethinks. By June this year, he had got through no fewer than 35 players, a record for a *Bundestrainer* in his opening 12 months in charge. Yet he still managed to keep his train firmly on the Euro 2008 track.

Another feature of Low's squad is its youth. He has given more debuts (13) in his first year than any other Germany boss, showing faith in the potential of such players as Stuttgart striker Mario Gomez, Werder Bremen right-back Clemens Fritz and Bayern Munich attacker Jan Schlaudraff.

Ballack's form and injury problems – he has twice undergone ankle operations at Chelsea – remain a concern but there have been few other negatives as Germany have won respect again. So much so that at home the national team now outstrip the clubs in the popularity stakes. But the flip side is inflated expectations and considerably more pressure. Third place at last year's World Cup induced delirium; now, nothing less than the highest step on the podium at Euro 2008 will be tolerated.

"Germany are respected again, and at home the national team are more popular than the clubs"

Outstanding tactician...Low

THE COACH

Joachim Low

Jurgen Klinsmann's assistant was appointed *Bundestrainer* a year ago when "Klinsi" stepped aside to spend more time with his family in California. Much underrated, even in Germany, "Jogi" is an outstanding tactician and man-manager. But arguably his most notable achievement has been to persuade Bundesliga clubs to work for the interests of the national team. Klinsmann had sought to confront; in contrast, the ex-Stuttgart, Fenerbahce, Karlsruhe, FC Tirol and Austria Wien boss went on a charm offensive.

KEY PLAYERS

Michael Ballack

The elegant skipper has twin challenges in the year ahead: to lead the *Nationalmannschaft* to their fourth European title and to win over the doubters in England who felt he went through the motions too often in his first season with Chelsea. A player of grace, impeccable creative impulses and goalscoring ability, he has long been labelled an unwilling captain for the national team, but the truth is that he has grown into the role.

Challenges...Ballack

Torsten Frings

With his long mane and headband, the Werder Bremen midfielder has the look of a Sioux warrior, and his play has plenty of fighting spirit to match. Inexhaustible and uncompromising in a holding role in front of the back four, but he also pushes forward purposefully. If things are not going well, this natural leader is invariably the first to issue a rallying call. Surprisingly for such a strong character, he did not feel at home in the superstar-laden Bayern Munich ranks in the 2004-05 season.

Born leader...Frings

Composure...Metzelder

Christoph Metzelder

A thinking man's centre-back who relies on a keen sense of anticipation, speed, well-timed tackles and composure to get the job done. Now back to his best after being out for 630 days in 2003 and 2004 with a career-threatening Achilles tendon complaint. Recently quit Borussia Dortmund to join Real Madrid, jilting Juventus in the process. ●

SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GOALS
GOALKEEPERS				
Robert ENKE	Hannover	24.08.77	1	0
Timo HILDEBRAND	Valencia (Spa)	05.04.79	5	0
Jens LEHMANN	Arsenal (Eng)	10.11.69	46	0
DEFENDERS				
Gonzalo CASTRO	Bayer Leverkusen	11.06.87	1	0
Arne FRIEDRICH	Hertha Berlin	29.05.79	49	0
Manuel FRIEDRICH	Bayer Leverkusen	13.09.79	7	1
Clemens FRITZ	Werder Bremen	07.12.80	7	1
Robert HUTH	Middlesbrough (Eng)	18.08.84	17	2
Marcell JANSEN	Bayern Munich	04.11.85	16	1
Philipp LAHM	Bayern Munich	11.11.83	34	2
Alexander MADLUNG	Wolfsburg	11.07.82	2	0
Per MERTESACKER	Werder Bremen	29.09.84	33	1
Christoph METZELDER	Real Madrid (Spa)	05.11.80	32	0
MIDFIELDERS				
Gerald ASAMOAH	Schalke	03.10.78	43	6
Michael BALLACK	Chelsea (Eng)	26.09.76	77	35
Tim BOROWSKI	Werder Bremen	02.05.80	29	2
Paul FREIER	Bayer Leverkusen	26.07.79	19	1
Torsten FRINGS	Werder Bremen	22.11.76	68	10
Robert HILBERT	Stuttgart	16.10.84	2	0
Thomas HITZLSPERGER	Stuttgart	05.04.82	25	3
Simon ROLFES	Bayer Leverkusen	21.01.82	2	0
Bernd SCHNEIDER	Bayer Leverkusen	17.11.73	78	3
Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER	Bayern Munich	01.08.84	43	13
Piotr TROCHOWSKI	Hamburg	22.03.84	4	0
FORWARDS				
Mario GOMEZ	Stuttgart	10.07.85	3	3
Patrick HELMES	Koln	01.03.84	2	0
Stefan KIESSLING	Bayer Leverkusen	25.01.84	1	0
Miroslav KLOSE	Bayern Munich	09.06.78	69	33
Kevin KURANYI	Schalke	02.03.82	40	18
Lukas PODOLSKI	Bayern Munich	04.06.85	38	22
Jan SCHLAUDRAFF	Bayern Munich	18.07.83	3	0

Team ethic...Low has helped foster a collegial atmosphere

Rise and fall

Ukrainian football has come to prominence on the international stage in recent times, but there are big problems at home

UKRAINIAN FOOTBALL has had two remarkable successes in recent times. Last year, the national team far surpassed expectations by reaching the last eight at their first World Cup. And in April this year, the federation received hosting rights for the Euro 2012 finals, jointly with Poland.

But these achievements cannot hide the fact that the Ukrainian game has some big problems – the animosity between the federation and the Professional Football League, poor refereeing standards, violence in the stadiums, negligible television revenues and a lack of opportunity for home-grown talent in the domestic league because of a surfeit of low-quality foreign players.

The federation, led by former Dynamo Kyiv president Hryhorii Surkis, is barely on speaking terms with the PFL, led by Ravil Safiullin, a former vice-president of Dynamo's arch-rivals, Shakhtar Donetsk. The PFL and many of the clubs believe that the country's refereeing committee is in the pocket of the federation and feel Surkis is able to persuade the referees to favour Dynamo, who are owned by his younger brother, Ihor. As a result, most clubs have invited foreign referees to officiate their league matches.

At the end of last season, when Dynamo reclaimed the league title from Shakhtar, the latter's Romanian coach, Mircea Lucescu, went as far as to claim that his club would never again be champions while the Surkis brothers were in power. The presidents of six top-division clubs began plotting to remove Hryhorii Surkis from his post, and it was only the winning of the Euro 2012 hosting rights that calmed the situation.

That development brought a dramatic change in the attitude towards the federation president. Until recently, the media regularly insinuated that Surkis had been involved in corruption and fraud. After the Euro 2012 decision, he was proclaimed as a national hero and the only person capable of adequately overseeing Ukraine's preparations for the finals.

Clashes with militia

As for violence in the stadiums, it reached a new level during this year's Cup Final between Dynamo and Shakhtar at Kiev's Olympiyskyi stadium. Thirty people were injured during clashes between Dynamo fans and a special unit of riot militia, who were widely condemned for contributing to the carnage with their heavy-handed tactics. The whole country was shocked by TV pictures that showed one officer beating a 16-year-old girl in Dynamo colours. "It's scary," said Dynamo coach Anatoliy Demyanenko. "If we carry on like this, people will stop coming to stadiums."

The federation began consultations with the police authorities, supporters' clubs and city councils to address the issue of security. The big question is whether the right lessons have been learned or whether it could all happen again.

But perhaps the biggest problem affecting Ukrainian football is the bad management of clubs. Many of the country's richest men made their fortunes by cashing in on the privatisation of Ukraine's industries following the collapse of Communism in the early 1990s. They started to invest heavily in football as a way of making friends with influence in government circles who happened to like the game. These investors did not care too much about results on the pitch or the proper functioning of their club.

> "Clubs from the less developed industrial areas have a miserable existence"

On the up...Oleh Blokhin (third from right) congratulates his players

Metalurh Donetsk, as an example, have a budget of £10million, which makes them one of the richest clubs in Ukraine, but they rarely attract more than 500 fans for home league matches. Since 2002, 53 foreign players of 22 nationalities have passed through, while no coach (including big names such as Slavoljub Muslin and Co Adriaanse) has survived in the post for more than six months.

Clubs from less developed industrial areas or those supported financially by their local municipality live out a miserable existence. Arsenal Kyiv, who had been owned by the city council, were declared bankrupt this year and bought by local businessman Vadim Rabinovich for just £50,000. Vasyl Kobin, the top striker of provincial Karpaty Lviv, publicly revealed that his monthly salary, without bonuses, is £500.

National coach Oleh Blokhin believes the top division is far too weak and needs

after they reached the World Cup quarter-finals by beating Switzerland

investment. "We need at least five or six financially stable clubs that really will fight for the league title," he said. "We have to increase competitiveness or we will see only a few hundred spectators in the stands, and I will tear my hair out in the search for quality players for the national team."

Against such a background, Shakhtar and Dynamo stand out like Gullivers in Lilliput. Shakhtar have the biggest annual budget in Ukraine – £45m – followed by Dynamo's £25m. The pair have won every title except one since the formation of the Ukrainian League in 1992 (Dynamo 12, Shakhtar 3; Tavriya Simferopol won the other, the first), and no other club has finished even as runners-up since Chornomorets Odessa in 1996. That, of course, means that the big two have had a stranglehold on Champions League entry. But, ironically, their domination at home has contributed to their general lack of competitiveness in Europe. Last season, for example, neither club made it through their group in the Champions League, despite big financial injections.

The lack of success in Europe prompted Ihor Surkis to suggest a radical restructuring of the top division. "Many of the 16 teams are not competitive and very weak from an organisational and financial point of view," he said. "The League must be restructured as soon as possible. We have to keep only the eight strongest clubs and play each other four times [instead of twice] during the season."

For the time being, though, the big two have used the lure of Champions League football to catch some more big-name foreign players for large fees. Shakhtar's billionaire owner Rinat Akhmetov bankrolled the purchase of Italian forward Cristiano Lucarelli from Livorno (£5.5m), Brazilian right-back Ilsinho from Sao Paulo (£6.5m) and Mexican international attacking midfielder Nery Castillo from Olympiakos for a staggering £13.5m, a new club record. Dynamo bought Senegalese defender Pape Diakhate from Nancy, also for a club record £4.5m, Guinean forward Ismael Bangoura of Le Mans (£4m) and Brazilian midfielder Michael from Palmeiras (£2m).

There is a new limit of seven foreigners per team, reduced from eight after pleas from Blokhin, who has an ageing national squad with little fresh blood. He says: "Our top clubs have to trust more our young players, maybe even at the expense of the Champions League. If they continue to rely mainly on foreigners, Ukrainian football will not have a bright future."

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Dnipro, Metalist, Zorya...a guide to the top-division teams

1 ZAKARPATTYA UZHGOROD
A yo-yo club. Their close ties with Dynamo Kyiv mean they land a lot of the current champions' cast-off players.

2 KARPATY LVIV
Came to prominence from nowhere in 1969 when, as a second division club, they won the USSR Cup. After Ukraine's independence, their best spell was in the late 1990s under coach Miron Markevich when they finished third in the League (1998) and reached the Cup Final (1999). Recently signed a sponsorship deal with oil refinery company Galychyna. The city of Lviv was the birthplace of Ukrainian football, more than a hundred years ago.

3 DYNAMO KYIV
The most successful club from the territory of the former Soviet Union, with 25 league titles (13 USSR, 12 Ukraine). Won the Cup-winners Cup in 1975 and 1986 and the European Super Cup in 1975, thanks largely to their great coach Valerii Lobanovskyi. Last season Dynamo became the first Ukrainian club to do the treble – League, Cup and Super Cup. Established in 1927 as the representative club of the Soviet militia (police), and took their blue and white colours from the militia uniform.

4 ARSENAL KYIV
Former army club, renamed in 2001 from CSKA to Arsenal after the Kiev city council bought a majority shareholding. Declared bankrupt earlier this year and have now been bought by Ukrainian oligarch Vadim Rabinovich. The club reached the Cup Final in 1998 and 2001 but have generally had little to shout about.

5 NAFTOVYK-UKRNAFTA OKHTYRKA
Won promotion as second level champions last term and rewarded fans with free entry to all home games in what is their inaugural top-flight campaign. The town of Okhtyrka is regarded as the oil capital of Ukraine, and, not surprisingly, the club are sponsored by an oil concern, Ukrnafta.

6 METALIST KHARKIV
A club with loyal fans, proud traditions and an excellent academy but have only one trophy to their name – the 1988 USSR Cup. Metalist received a big development boost when industrialist billionaire Olexander Yaroslavsky took control of the club in 2004.

7 FC KHARKIV
Municipal football club created in 2005 as the successors of Arsenal Kharkiv. Hit the headlines just before this season kicked off when selling promising striker Olexander Gladkyi to Shakhtar for £1.5million.

8 VORSKLA POLTAVA
Provincial club with one of the lowest budgets in the League – £1.5m – and for whom top-flight survival is always the main objective. Take their name from the river Vorskla, which flows through historic Poltava.

9 KRYVBAS
One of the most promising clubs at the turn of the decade, when they finished third in the League two years running. They have gone downhill since, after Lakshmi Mittal, the new owner of the club's main sponsor – steel manufacturer Arcelor Mittal – withdrew practically all financial support. Among the favourites to be relegated this term.

10 DNIPRO DNIPROPETROVSK
Won the USSR championship twice, in 1983 and 1988, but still looking for their first Ukrainian silverware. One of the few clubs capable of mounting a challenge to the big two. Sponsored by Privat, one of the country's biggest industrial groups. Dnipro have spent £30million on a 31,000-capacity stadium that will open later this year.

11 METALURH ZAPORIZHYA
One of only five clubs to have played in all the Ukrainian top-flight campaigns. Nicknamed "The Steelers" because of their long-standing sponsorship deal with giant steel works Zaporizhstal. Last year, Metalurh opened a new 12,000-capacity stadium.

12 SHAKHTAR DONETSK
Founded in 1936 by decree of Joseph Stalin to be the representative club of the miners of the Donbas region. Their mining connection earned them the nickname "The Moles". Gained a reputation for being plucky fighters when winning the USSR Cup in 1961, 1962, 1980 and 1983 and the Ukrainian Cup in 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002 and 2004. Now, Shakhtar are Ukraine's biggest club in financial terms because of the backing of billionaire owner Rinat Akhmetov. Broke Dynamo's domestic stranglehold by winning the League in 2002 and then again in 2005 and 2006. The club are investing £120m in a new, five-star, 50,000-seater stadium, due to open next year.

13 METALURH DONETSK
Formed only 10 years ago as an amateur project of the chiefs of the Donetsk Metal Works but have rapidly been transformed into a footballing force capable of attracting such big football names as Jordi Cruyff and Co Adriaanse.

14 ZORYA LUHANSK
USSR champions in 1972 and runners-up in 1974 and 1975. Zorya slumped after Ukraine's independence, falling as low as the third level. Returned to the top flight in 2006 after topping the second division.

15 CHORNOMORETS ODESSA
Founder members of the Ukraine Vyscha Liga (top division) in 1992 and were runners-up in 1995 and 1996, but have suffered two relegations since then. Won the Ukrainian Cup in 1992 and 1994. Nicknamed "The Sailors" because Odessa is a port.

16 TAVRIYA SIMFEROPOL
Winners of the first Ukrainian championship, in 1992, and ever-presents in the top flight, though generally only mid-table finishers. The only club from the autonomous republic of Crimea in the top division.

The movers and shakers in Ukrainian football

● IHOR KOLOMOYSKY
A billionaire and the biggest investor in Dnipro. Also a federation vice-president and chairman of Privat, one of the country's biggest industrial concerns.

● OLEH BLOKHIN
Ukraine coach since 2003 and led the team to their first World Cup finals last year, when they reached the quarter-finals. Threatened to resign earlier this year unless the League introduced a limit of seven foreigners per team, which it duly did. Has also coached Olympiakos, PAOK and Ionikos in Greece. Was a renowned striker for Dynamo Kyiv and the USSR.

● RINAT AKHMETOV
The richest man in the country who took charge of Shakhtar Donetsk in 1996 after previous president Akhat Bragin was killed in a bomb attack at the club's stadium. Akhmetov has invested heavily, both in top-class foreign players (Julius Aghahowa, Matuzalem, Elano, Jadson, Cristiano Lucarelli) and the club's infrastructure (the £15m luxury Kirsha training centre and youth academy). Owns the SCM industrial group and is said to be worth £7bn.

● RAVIL SAFIULLIN
Former Shakhtar vice-president who was elected president of Ukraine's Professional Football League in 2000. An MP and friend of Rinat Akhmetov (both are ethnic Tatars). Unsuccessfully tried to stand in the way of Oleh Blokhin's demand to reduce the number of foreigners per team.

● IHOR SURKIS
Owner of Dynamo Kyiv and younger brother of federation president Hryhorii Surkis. In 1995, as Dynamo general manager, Ihor received a life ban from football for his alleged involvement in a plot to bribe the referee of a home Champions League match against Panathinaikos. He was later cleared and became Dynamo president in 2002. Earlier this year he took full control of the club after raising his shareholding to 81 per cent.

● MIRCEA LUCESCU
Shakhtar's Romanian coach, renowned for his public outbursts. Last season he accused federation president Hryhorii Surkis of corruption, and after almost every Shakhtar defeat he attempts to put the blame on the referee or a "conspiracy" against the club.

● ANDRII SHEVCHENKO
Iconic figure for all Ukrainian fans and a football ambassador for the country around the world. European player of the year in 2004 during his highly successful spell at Milan, but had a disappointing first season with Chelsea in 2006-07. Makes huge charity donations to orphanages all over Ukraine.

● VICTOR KORZH
Former international cyclist who was appointed Ukraine's minister for family, youth and sports in 2006. One of the key figures in the team that won the Euro 2012 hosting rights for the country.

● HRYHORII SURKIS
The godfather of modern Ukrainian football. The millionaire took control of Dynamo Kyiv in 1993 and saved them from bankruptcy. He was elected president of Ukraine's Professional Football League in 1996 and then federation president in 2000. Was a driving force behind Ukraine's successful bid to co-host Euro 2012.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Big two battle...Shakhtar (in orange) and Dynamo

● Ukraine's Supreme League was established in 1991 after the break-up of the Soviet Union. In 2007, it was named the Biola Vyscha Liga after its beverages company sponsor.

● The Professional Football League was established in 1996; before that, the Supreme League was governed by the federation. The PFL represents 58 professional clubs, which put out 65 teams between them.

● The league season runs from mid-July to mid-May, with a break from early December to early March. The 16 top-division clubs face each other twice.

● From this season, top-division clubs are allowed to field no more than seven foreigners at one time. The reduction, from eight, has been made to allow home-grown players a better chance of breaking through. Clubs also have to pay a £7,500 registration fee when acquiring a foreign player, the money being used to develop youth football.

Maxi MORALEZ

ARGENTINA

Little big man in the Under-20 World Cup triumph

CONTEMPORARY FOOTBALL owes a debt to Argentina. As the game moves ever more towards pace, power and athleticism, the strength of Argentinian football identity means that they, at least, can still find a place for short players with a low centre of gravity.

The point was underlined at the Under-20 World Cup in Canada as Argentina's collection of footballing midgets overcame some hulking European sides on their way to yet another triumph in the tournament. Maxi Moralez was the smallest of the lot, at 1.6 metres and 54 kilos. But the little man was a giant in the tournament, winning the Silver Ball for his overall contribution, the Bronze Shoe for his four goals, and having a claim to be considered man of the match in the Final, when his team came from behind to deservedly beat the Czech Republic.

"Moralez had a fantastic tournament," said his coach Hugo Tocalli. "And I'm sure that he'll be one of the players from this squad who'll go on to have a brilliant future in the senior Argentina side."

Back in January in the qualifying tournament, the South American Under-20 Championship, Moralez had not looked especially impressive. Already a key player for Racing Club, he was handed the No 10 shirt and great things were expected, but his contribution was fitful. Argentina sent a stronger squad to the world event in Canada, and when Moralez was handed the No 17 shirt he seemed justified in fearing for his place.

In the event, injuries to Damian Escudero and Mauro Zarate made his selection automatic. But he also had a coach who had expressed his great belief in his ability and style of play. "Moralez is the audacity of our street football in its maximum expression," said Tocalli in January.

It also helped that in July the coach was more successful in finding a position for him. In qualification Moralez had spent much of his time wide on the left, hard going for a player who is far happier having the ball played to his feet than chasing a pass struck into space.

In Canada he had more freedom to roam, and in the Final, especially, he buzzed around the giant Czechs and stung them. "I enjoy being on the ball," Moralez said after the game. "I like to be able to move across the attacking line because it's the position that brings out the best in me. That way I don't have too much responsibility to drop back and mark, and I can wander around to pick up the ball."

His sting would be fiercer still with better finishing skills. He failed to score on two occasions in the Final with only the keeper to beat, and the most important goal he scored in the competition, the winner against Mexico in the quarter-finals, came with the aid of a deflection.

But now he faces what will probably be his biggest challenge, after being tempted abroad to join FC Moscow. It will be fascinating to see if the little man can walk tall among the giants of Europe.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club FC Moscow (Rus)
Country Argentina
Born February 27, 1987, in Granadero Baigorria
Previous club Racing Club
Honours Under-20 World Cup 2007

Benny FEILHABER

Midfielder who struck Gold with the USA

UNITED STATES

BENNY FEILHABER has bags of creativity and skill for a defensive midfielder and was a key player in the United States' triumph at the CONCACAF Gold Cup. The 22-year-old scored the winning goal in the Final against Mexico, a stunning volley from 25 metres.

Of Austro-Jewish descent, Feilhaber was born in Rio de Janeiro – the city his paternal grandfather decamped to in the 1930s as Nazi anti-Semitism began to grip central Europe – and moved with his family to the United States at the age of six.

Feilhaber's big break came in 2005 when he was included in the US squad for the Under-20 World Cup in Holland. He was acclaimed as one of the players of the tournament, a view shared by Bundesliga side Hamburg, who immediately took him on. He spent his first season in Germany in the reserves, but broke into the first team last season, including appearances in the Champions League against Arsenal and Porto.

Yet Hamburg plummeted down the table, coach Thomas Doll was fired and his successor, Dutchman Huub Stevens, sent Feilhaber back to the reserves. Now, Derby have come to the rescue, the promoted club swooping to give Feilhaber his first taste of the English Premiership.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Derby (Eng)
Country United States
Born January 19, 1985, in Rio de Janeiro
Previous clubs Northwood High School, UCLA, Hamburg (Ger)
International debut March 2007, v Ecuador
International caps 10 (2 goals)

Guirane N'DAW

Sochaux's jewel in the crown

SENEGAL

LYON, THE six-in-a-row French champions, have made a habit of cherry-picking the best talent from other Ligue 1 clubs. So it was a shock to see them fail in their attempt to buy Sochaux's versatile Senegalese international Guirane N'Daw this summer.

New Lyon coach Alain Perrin, signed from Sochaux to replace Gerard Houllier, had made it clear that he wanted N'Daw to follow him, highlighting his assets – a quick, very tall and athletic left-footer able to play in central defence, at left-back or in his best position as a midfield enforcer. But Sochaux chairman Jean-Luc Plessis was in no mood to play ball, saying: "In life you have to know what you want, and I want N'Daw to stay. My duty is to make our team as competitive as possible, and that means holding on to N'Daw."

Sochaux academy director Jean-Luc Ruty, a long-serving stopper with the club, spotted the then 14-year-old playing in the suburbs of Dakar. After weighing up whether to take him or Pape Diakhate, who recently joined Dynamo Kyiv after excelling at Nancy, he plumped for the former. "He was so mature both physically and in temperament," Ruty says.

Nick Bidwell

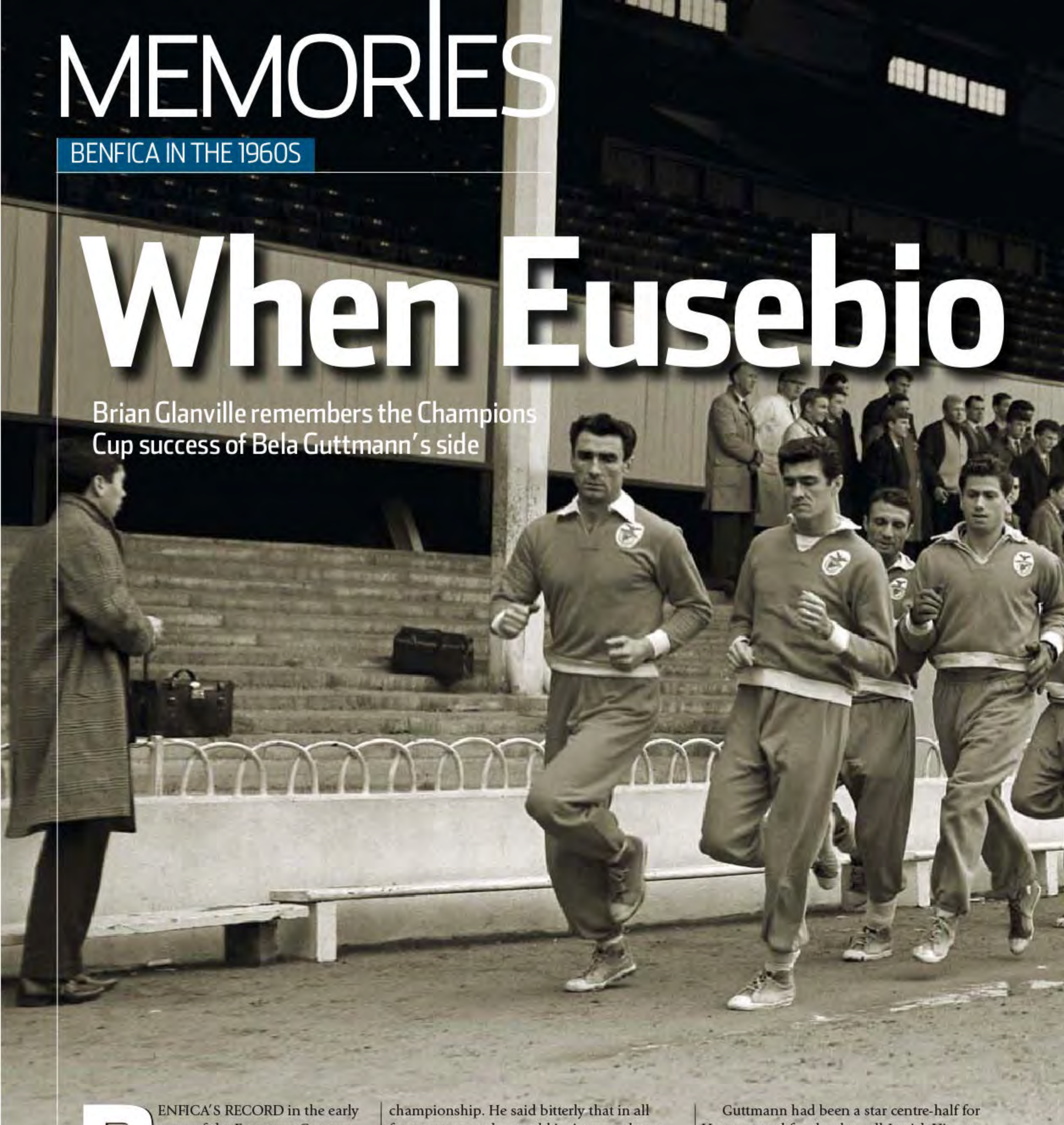
FACT FILE

Club Sochaux (Fra)
Country Senegal
Born April 24, 1984, in Rufisque
Previous club US Ouakam
International debut January 2006, v DR Congo
International caps 12 (0 goals)

BENFICA IN THE 1960S

When Eusebio

Brian Glanville remembers the Champions Cup success of Bela Guttmann's side



BENFICA'S RECORD in the early years of the European Cup was extraordinary, surpassed only by Real Madrid, who had half a dozen victories. The Lisbon club appeared in three Finals in a row between 1961 and 1963 – winning the first two – and were finalists again in 1965 and 1968.

The key figure in their two successes was surely veteran Hungarian coach Bela Guttmann. How well I remember meeting him for the first time in a trattoria in central Rome one lunchtime in 1955. He had just, bizarrely, been dismissed as manager of Milan, even though they were still leading the championship. He said bitterly that in all future contracts he would insist on a clause: "Not to be dismissed when the club is top of the League."

He also recounted a wry anecdote. Some years ago, he said, when Lucchese, the Tuscan club, were in Serie A, they took the train to Turin to play formidable Juventus. On the journey their coach, poor fellow, died. Instant panic. How could any Italian team take the field without a coach? So the directors phoned frantically all over Italy till at last they found one, who arrived just in time to take charge. Lucchese forced a draw, and the players carried the coach off the field on their shoulders.

Guttmann had been a star centre-half for Hungary and for the then all-Jewish Viennese club, Hakoah, where he had reportedly insisted on being given silk shirts. Somehow he survived the war – "God helped me!" he once told me – to become a successful coach, both in Europe and South America.

After Milan, he took charge of Sao Paulo in Brazil, then Porto, whom he steered to a last-gasp championship win in 1959 ahead of Benfica, who promptly enlisted him.

As a coach, his watchword was adventure, using 4-2-4 as a base but always ready to throw extra players upfield. The core of his Benfica team was formed by

ruled Europe

Spurred on...Guttmann (right of main picture) puts Benfica through their paces at White Hart Lane in 1962. Eusebio (right) had joined the club the previous year

gifted players from Portugal's African colonies, though the incomparable Eusebio was yet to come.

African connection

The driving, hard-shooting left-half Mario Coluna was there already, from Mozambique. Jose Aguas, the clever centre-forward who was adept when he had his back to goal, was Angolan, as was the skilled inside-right, Joaquim Santana, who would, however, lose his place in time to Eusebio. The long-legged centre-half Germano Figueiredo was picked up for a mere £2,000 in his mid-twenties from second division Lisbon club, Atletico. "He bounces with energy," said the admiring England team manager Walter Winterbottom. He even went in goal in the 1965 European Cup Final against Internazionale in Milan, replacing the injured Costa Pereira, but injuries, alas, would be his nemesis.

When Coluna arrived in 1954, Otto Gloria, the Brazilian then coaching the club and later to return, used him at centre-forward, shifting Aguas to the left flank. But later he dropped Coluna into midfield and

Wembley woe...Cesare Maldini stops Eusebio during Milan's 1963 victory

restored Aguas as striker. Guttmann made Coluna his left-half but expressed his doubts: "He cannot mark anybody; he has to run up and down the whole field." He was, though, an inspirational captain.

Benfica's passage to the 1961 Final in Berne was imposing and sometimes dramatic. Above all in the semi-final second leg away to Rapid in Vienna, Guttmann's favourite city. The match ended in a riot when Rapid players, who had managed only a 1-1 draw having been thrashed 3-0 in Lisbon, attacked their opponents, with fans joining in. The upshot was that Rapid were banned from the Prater stadium for European games for three seasons.

Cut above...Guttmann heard about Eusebio in a Lisbon barber's

Benfica had beaten Hearts home and away in the first round. "We were outclassed," admitted veteran right-winger Gordon Smith. The Lisbon side then thrashed Budapest side Ujpest, whom Guttmann had once coached, 6-2 in the first leg, losing 2-1 in the return, then Denmark's AGF Aarhus 7-2 in the quarter-finals.

Barcelona, who started the Final as strong favourites, were a team of polyglot stars with three famed Hungarians in Sandor Kocsis, Zoltan Czibor and Ladislao Kubala, plus incisive Brazilian Evaristo. Guttmann would later admit he was "afraid of their forward line". But he had imbued his team with fighting spirit and would be helped by an untypically dreadful day for Barca keeper Antonio Ramallets.

Barca went ahead in the 20th minute, when Kocsis, such a hero of the 1954 World Cup finals, headed in a cross from accomplished Spanish playmaker Luisito Suarez. Twice Barca threatened to double the lead, but then Benfica scored twice in a minute around the half-hour mark. First, when Coluna's defence-splitting pass released left-winger Domiciano Cavem, Ramallets dashed impulsively off his line, enabling his opponent to square the ball for Aguas to score easily. Next, when Neto lobbed into Barca's box, defender Gensana back-headed the ball, causing Ramallets to push it desperately against a post, whence it dropped tantalisingly over the line.

Coluna made it 3-1 on 55 minutes hitting a fine right-footed volley after a Cavem cross had been headed out. Kocsis headed against a post, a Kubala shot hit both posts but came out, then a Czibor drive made it 3-2. But the trio were destined to lose against Guttmann, their compatriot.

Precocious splendour

Eusebio made a scoring debut for Benfica a week after the European triumph, erupting upon the scene in all his precocious splendour. Luck had played a part in his acquisition. Guttmann had had a chance meeting with his former Sao Paulo player Carlos Bauer in a Lisbon barber's. Bauer, Brazil's right-half at the 1950 World Cup, had been eulogising Eusebio, whom he had watched while on a tour of Africa with a Brazilian team. Guttmann acted promptly, acquiring the 19-year-old for a mere £10,000.

Eusebio played for Benfica at that summer's Paris tournament, scoring three times against Pele's Santos, who won 6-3. It was soon clear that, with

WHO WAS WHO

The Benfica line-up for the European Cup semi-final against Spurs in 1962

Top row, left to right

ANGELO MARTINS
Central defender who won 20 caps for Portugal.

MARIO JOAO
Defender who won three caps for Portugal.

DOMICIANO CAVEM
A versatile player – he featured as a striker, midfielder and right-sided defender – who spent almost his entire career at Benfica.

FERNANDO CRUZ
Right-back who spent 10 seasons at Benfica.

GERMANO FIGUEIREDO
Central defender who joined from second division Lisbon club Atletico in 1960. Outstanding in the 1961 European Cup Final against Barcelona.

COSTA PEREIRA
Mozambique-born goalkeeper who spent 12 seasons at Benfica and won 22 caps for Portugal.

Bottom row, left to right

JOSE AUGUSTO
Winger who was dubbed the "Portuguese Garrincha". Spent 10 seasons in Lisbon, going on to coach the Portuguese national side.

EUSEBIO
The first great African footballer, a forward of blistering pace and wonderful technique. Made his debut for Benfica at 19 and scored 38 goals in 46 games for Portugal. Was top scorer at the 1966 World Cup in England. Knee trouble had appeared to end his career at 32, but he then played in the North American Soccer League.

JOSE AGUAS
Team captain. The Angola-born forward was league top scorer five times in 12 seasons with Benfica.

MARIO COLUNA
Mozambique-born midfielder who captained Portugal at the 1966 World Cup. Now back in his homeland, where he had spells as FA president and sports minister.

ANTONIO SIMOES
Left winger and provider of many assists to Eusebio. Went on to coach Benfica and Portugal.

No stopping them...Benfica overcame Spurs en route to a brilliant final win against Real Madrid

his glorious pace and his dynamic right foot, he was the new revelation. His importance was clear the next season when Benfica, without him, lost the first leg of their European Cup quarter-final against Nurnberg, 3-1. But they won the return 6-0 to set up a tie with Tottenham, who had just become the first club to do the league and cup Double in England that century. In Lisbon in the first leg Spurs manager Bill Nicholson was over-cautious, packing his defence, which still couldn't prevent Aguas and incisive right-winger Jose Augusto scoring in the first half. Spurs looked better after the break, with big centre-forward Bobby Smith heading a goal, but Augusto headed a third for Benfica. So all was set for a torrid return at White Hart Lane, where Spurs had previously, in a boiling atmosphere, thrashed Poland's Gornik Zabrze 8-1, after losing the first leg 4-2.

Shrewd as ever, Guttmann did his best to diffuse things and perhaps influence the referee by stating that he "expected a bloodbath". There wasn't one. Spurs had a goal by Jimmy Greaves somewhat controversially disallowed for offside, and on the quarter-hour Aguas scored on the counter-attack. Spurs mounted ever more desperate attacks through the second half, but fine goalkeeping by Costa Pereira and supreme defending by Germano kept them at bay. A glorious Final would take place in Amsterdam between Benfica and Real Madrid, winners of the first five European Cups and for whom the insidious combination of Alfredo Di Stefano and Ferenc Puskas were still so dangerous, though both well into their thirties.

The game could be seen as a superb anachronism, with both sides so adventurous. Puskas shot a first-half hat-trick, once trotting half the length of the field in pursuit of Di Stefano's exquisite through pass, once coiling that famed left foot to strike a fulminating drive. But Aguas and Cavem replied.

At half-time, Guttmann told Cavem to mark Di Stefano, and the tide turned. When Puskas lost the ball, Coluna hit a 30-yarder to equalise. Eusebio ran riot. Felled by Pachin, he banged home the spot-kick. Receiving Coluna's free-kick, he hit a right-footed thunderbolt that struck a defender and was diverted home for 5-3.

Guttmann left Benfica that summer declaring that they hadn't kept their bargains. Chilean Fernando Riera took over and Benfica reached their third European Cup Final in a row, this time against Milan at Wembley. A bad foul on Coluna effectively put him out of the game, a mere hobbler. A sustained burst by Eusebio, a shot in off a post after a pass from giant centre-forward Jose Torres, put Benfica ahead after 19 minutes. But Brazilian Jose Altafini equalised just before the hour and scored the winner with 20 minutes remaining.

Two years later Benfica were in the Final yet again, this time against Inter at the San Siro. Real Madrid had been conquered in the quarter-finals but the Final, played in torrential rain, was an anti-climax. Benfica, down to 10 men and with Germano in goal, lost 1-0.

By contrast, the 1968 Final against Manchester United at Wembley was exhilarating, though Benfica seriously maltreated George Best. He would have revenge, however, with a superb solo goal at the start of extra-time, after Benfica seemed to have taken control. They collapsed then and United ran out winners, 4-1, though a stupendous save by Alex Stepney from Eusebio's weaker left foot had kept his team afloat.

Eusebio had been seriously troubled that season with an injured right knee. But that hadn't stopped him scoring from a 35-yard free-kick against Juventus in the semi-final. ●

> **It was a glorious Final against Real Madrid, who still had Puskas and Di Stefano. For Benfica, Eusebio ran riot**

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Eusebio in contract dispute

SEPTEMBER 1969

ROGER MACDONALD spoke to Eusebio, who was in dispute with Benfica about a new contract. His previous one had expired on July 31, and the club were unwilling to allow him to leave on a free transfer. The player had demanded a new three-year deal with a signing fee of £109,000. Benfica had offered half that amount, but Eusebio was reluctant to lower his demands.

"All this is extremely unpleasant," he said on the phone from Lisbon. "I don't want you to think I am excessively greedy. But you must see my point of view. I will be 28 next January, which is no longer young for a player. I must think of my family's future; I have a wife, two daughters and another child on the way, apart from my relatives in Mozambique.

"My present pay is simply not enough. You know, I get £4,400 a year – quite a lot by Portuguese standards perhaps, but not by comparison with the salaries in Italy and even England.

"I do not want to leave Benfica, but unless we can reach an agreement, I will have no choice. I have made many sacrifices for them over the past nine years – you could say I have given my body and soul to the team. To be frank, they have had me on the cheap for too long."

Trophy-laden...Guttmann flanked by Eusebio and Coluna in 1962

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums
worldsoccer.com

Brazil's World Cup bid lacks competitive edge

They should not be complacent about 2014 just because they are the only candidates

FIFA'S EXECUTIVE committee will shortly meet with all due pomp and ceremony within the steel and glass bunker cavern that is its new headquarters in Zurich and choose Brazil to host the World Cup finals in 2014 – probably.

At the same time it will decide whether to scrap the controversial system of rotation and thus push Europe to the front of the queue to play host in 2018. As FIFA president Sepp Blatter has admitted: "Rotation was a device by which we could send the World Cup to Africa for the first time."

As for 2014, the Brazilians – unfortunately for themselves really – have no competition. Four years ago the South American federation agreed that the home of the record five-times World Cup winners would be its sole, unanimous choice. Those were the days when the controversial system of "rotation" was still officially FIFA policy; so that South America would receive its due turn after North/Central America in 1994, Europe in 1998 (France) and 2006 (Germany), Asia in 2002 (Japan and South Korea) and Africa in 2010 (South Africa). (The sixth FIFA confederation is the minnow world of Oceania but that does not count for World Cups, particularly since Australia left last year to join the Asian confederation.)

When rotation was dreamed up, Africa was nominated for 2010 and, simultaneously, South America for 2014. But that will be the end of the road. The World Cup is such a vast technological and financial undertaking nowadays that neither Africa nor South America have any other countries capable of hosting the finals.

No one is sure whether South Africa can do a good job in three years' time; many fear not, especially when it comes to the ever-more contentious issue of security. This is why FIFA has set up its own offices in the republic and is applying an ever-firmer grip on organisational and administrative issues.

Similarly, enormous question-marks hang over Brazil's capability. At occasional stages along the road the possibility of rival candidatures has been raised. The first was a proposed joint bid by Argentina and Chile; that fell by the wayside because FIFA – after the financially crippling experience of Japan/Korea – will not countenance a co-hosting when there is a single nation that can do the job.

The second possibility was that of Colombia. But the Colombians hardly have a track record to inspire faith. The country has a tarnished international image because of the power of the drug cartels.

Presentation time...the Brazilian delegation formally submit their 2014 World Cup bid at FIFA headquarters in Zurich

Furthermore, Colombia pulled out of hosting the 1986 finals at short notice because, after the World Cup had been expanded to 24 teams, the Bogota government wanted FIFA to revert to the outmoded 16-nation format.

Recently, after Venezuela's lively hosting of the Copa America, there was brief, wild talk of a late bid to contest the Brazilians' secure passage. That talk was cut short very quickly after it was pointed out that the deadline for applications and the submission of initial documentation had already long gone.

All Brazil's fans believe the World Cup hosting is guaranteed. But that is not the case. Blatter has warned: "Even though Brazil is the only candidate it must still fulfil all the demands we make on every World Cup host. If it cannot meet our standards, then we will have to look elsewhere."

Whispering campaign

This is why Mexico, the United States, Germany and England are all keeping one eye on the Brazilian candidature. If there is the slightest hint that Brazil is unable to undertake the massive essential redevelopment of its infrastructure – in particular its dilapidated old stadiums – then a whispering campaign will begin.

Mexico, the US, England and Belgium/Holland have all declared a possible interest in hosting the finals in 2018, by which time rotation is expected to be history. In a sense, their battle has already begun. All know they may be needed four years sooner than planned if the Brazilians cannot come up to scratch.

This was one of the reasons for the recent verbal attack on England's 2018 bid by Jack Warner, the scandal-entwined Trinidadian president of CONCACAF. Warner had been angered by ferocious criticism of his credibility from Britain, from John McBeth, president of the Scottish FA, and investigative journalist Andrew Jennings. But, in a wider context, Warner was putting down a marker for the fight over host venue for both 2014 (possibly) and 2018 (certainly).

But England and the rest are not Brazil's most dangerous enemy in pursuit of South America's first World Cup since Argentina in 1978. That enemy can be summed up in one word: complacency.

If Brazil cannot meet our standards, then we will have to look elsewhere

FIFA president Sepp Blatter

Bitter pill...Domenech and his players are downcast after losing to Italy in the World Cup Final

Platini wrong on Raymond

UEFA PRESIDENT Michel Platini should think again before castigating French compatriot Raymond Domenech for comments that reflected an ongoing bitterness about events at the World Cup Final last year.

The France coach was talking about the challenge awaiting *Les Bleus* this season in the Euro 2008 qualifiers and the prospects for the Italy-France return in Milan. Last season, just two months after the World Cup Final in which Italy edged France on penalties after the expulsion of Zinedine Zidane, France took a measure of revenge by winning their first Euro duel 3-1.

Domenech has always claimed he was far more personally engaged at the World Cup in Germany by the quarter-final against Spain, since his family had fled north to France to escape the fighting during the Spanish civil war.

Domenech's comments about the Italians have been widely reported (see Dispatches, page 26). UEFA jumped up and down with fury at the remarks. But they seemed perfectly reasonable to me. During the World Cup, Italian newspapers split their football coverage half and half between events on the pitch in Germany and events in the sports courts back home. No one could miss the tales emanating from Luciano Moggi and his multitude of mobile phones.

Platini spent five seasons in Italy playing for Juventus. He arrived there in 1982 just after the *Azzurri* had won the World Cup thanks to the goals of Paolo Rossi, who had just re-emerged from suspension after a major betting-and-bribes scandal. For Platini, of all people, to protest about the sanctity of the Italian game appears hardly judicious.

Rugby tries to cash in

RUGBY DOES not often feature in these columns, but the imminent rugby world cup has raised issues that run across all sports, football included.

For several years, media organisations have grown increasingly concerned at the attempts by federations to grab every last penny from their respective sport.

A leader in this move to monetise each kick of the ball has been English football through the Premier League, the world's most visible domestic football competition. Various attempts to restrict journalistic access and picture streaming have met with resistance from the media. Not surprisingly, however, all the other federations, leagues and other sports are falling over themselves to copy the English commercial model – just as all the other sports followed FIFA's path into the financial cul-de-sac of television rights and sponsorship contracts.

It took some tough talking from publishers to prise webcast pictures out of the mobile phone contract at the last football World Cup. Now, a larger media coalition has confronted the International Rugby Board about its proposed restrictions on reporting and presentation.

No one contests a federation's right to turn a profit from its event but crossing the boundary of freedom of expression in pursuit of ready cash is something else entirely. ●

Signed via YouTube

Buying players seen on the internet is the logical extension of video scouting

Illustration by Dave Semple

THE YOUTUBE generation is on its way, as we should have guessed ages ago. It has long been the practice for young Americans, seeking a soccer scholarship, to send video tapes of their greatest moments to college coaches. Who knows how many of them get watched, are acted upon or are dismissed as not telling the whole story? But the move towards electronic scouting has been going on for quite a while.

We have Sven Goran Eriksson signing a whole bunch of players for Manchester City whom he has not studied personally, in the old-fashioned way. Reports from scouts, plus videos and DVDs, now do the trick. I don't say that in any snide way – I honestly can't see any reason why satisfactory player assessment should not work that way.

Admittedly, part of my reasoning is that player assessment of any sort has always been a haphazard business. The gut feeling of an untrained observer has always been as likely to be correct as the 10-page dossier compiled by a fully-qualified coach.

That's football for you. Whatever it is, it is decidedly not science. Despite the insistence with which the modern coach tries to programme and diagram and explain every detail, football refuses to display scientific certainties. If not a science, then what? A similar problem bothered American philosopher Charles Peirce. He felt philosophy must be a science, with strictly-used scientific terms. There were no half-measures for Peirce: "Philosophy is either science or is balderdash."

If we apply the same sweeping alternatives to football, then we'll have to admit that coaching is a lot closer to balderdash than it is to science. We hear evidence of this virtually every day, as our coaches regale us with pronouncements that either fly in the face of the facts (the "we were the better team – despite the 0-4 scoreline" routine), or simply make mincemeat out of logic, viz Preki, the coach of Chivas USA, who – after his full-strength team had been soundly beaten by a Houston Dynamo side lacking four top players – said it was more difficult to play against reserve players than first-team players.

Balderdash for sure, but with enough truth in it to make it palatable. Maybe, somewhere between science and balderdash, coaching has its truths – but I suspect that these are ever-changing truths. At one point, Eriksson seemed to be signing players he had never seen – but he soon buried that idea, while admitting that he had made extensive use of videos. Whatever, he got his unorthodox team off to a flying start. And why not? Why should his unusual methods not work in an area where careful scouting and lengthy preparation have so often failed in the past?

But I would guess that the most fertile field for the new electronic scouting is going to be among the kids. The making of a DVD, however amateurish, is now within the capability of almost anyone, anywhere. And with the global stretch of YouTube, getting a video clip seen presents no problems.

Manchester United's so-called "signing" of nine-year-old Rhain Davis (what exactly has he or his parents signed, one wonders?) is apparently the result of having seen a DVD made by the boy's grandfather.

The video is up on YouTube for all to see and will no doubt have kindled a lot of interest among parents, not to mention agents, who think they are training the next superstar. So here comes the YouTube generation. At the same time as Rhain could be seen doing his tricks on the net, another video was highlighting the skills of a 13-year-old Peruvian, Pier Larrauri. The kid, it was reported, had "signed" for Bayern Munich. Well, that couldn't be right, FIFA regulations forbid the "international transfer" of players under 18. Bayern quickly clarified – the boy would simply be spending a year training with the club.

Yes, there are apparent difficulties in "signing" youngsters – from the FIFA regulation, and from rules applied within each country, rules such as the nearby-residency requirement laid down by the Premiership in England.

Abusive trafficking

The FIFA regulation had the most noble of intentions – it was designed to counter abusive trafficking in young players, to put out of business the cowboy operators who imported batches of teenagers from Africa and South America with promises of fame and fortune.

But the FIFA regulation looks increasingly like a dead duck. The idea that the world body could tell a family that it could not seek out the best training – never mind the best deal – for its talented son has never seemed legally sustainable. YouTube may be the final nail in the regulation's coffin. The internet is the ideal forum for kids and a wonderfully easy and cheap way of publicising a boy's skills.

No doubt clubs such as Manchester United and Bayern would prefer that the demo videos did not get on to YouTube, that the parents or agents contact them – and only them! – directly. But how likely is that when YouTube exposure offers the possibility of a bidding war between rich clubs?

Bidding? I mean merely giving the boys a range of clubs to choose from. The idea that there might be money involved, at ages when there is no possibility of a professional contract being signed, is surely preposterous balderdash. Isn't it? ●

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The battle for 2018

England is the right venue for the World Cup in 11 years, despite what Jack Warner says

A CRUCIAL BATTLE for the sanity of world football began in earnest this summer as the great and not-so-good of the global game engaged in fierce invective about the location of the 2018 World Cup.

That tournament is in the far blue yonder, and the decision about which nation will host the event is not due to be made for another five years. Yet the political manoeuvres and machinations surrounding it are a vital and vocal issue now.

At the heart of the debate is whether to end the FIFA policy of rotation of World Cups around the continents and bring the tournament back to the financial and playing powerbase of Europe after South Africa 2010 and South America 2014.

The answer is obvious to anyone with an ounce of feeling for the game. It would be commercial and corporate madness for the most prestigious competition of the world's biggest sport not to be played in its heartland for a full 20 years, especially now that the UEFA Champions League has become such an intimidating rival for television and sponsorship money.

Rotation of the World Cup may be a worthy aim. But its practical result would be to alienate Europe, by far football's most important region, at a time when international soccer is under severe pressure in the old continent from club interests.

The worst-case scenario is that it could seriously damage the affection for international football in Europe – and if it is ruined there, it won't be worth a candle anywhere else.

Too apocalyptic? Well, just ask the TV moguls and corporate giants where they'd like the 2018 tournament to be held. And think of how many European footballers are already "retiring" from the international game to concentrate on their club careers.

Leading the rotation brigade is the deplorable Jack Warner, a FIFA vice-president from Trinidad and Tobago, a man accused of major ticket irregularities relating to last year's World Cup, and against whom FIFA eventually registered its "disapproval" after an inconclusive investigation.

Silence would have been welcome from him. Instead, we've had provocative and derogatory comments about England, an appalling shouting of the odds. He claimed: "England is an irritant to Europe... I must fight moves to give the 2018 World Cup to England."

Serious candidate

This is in contrast with the public sentiments of Franz Beckenbauer, who engenders respect around the world. He said: "The most important thing is to end rotation and bring the tournament back to Europe. In my opinion there is only one very serious candidate – and that is England."

I know which vision of the future I'm backing. Beckenbauer did a fantastic job of organising the 2006 finals in Germany, and his success illustrates why the World Cup must return to the passion, enthusiasm, know-how and TV cash of Europe as swiftly as possible.

If Warner has his way, the 2018 tournament would be in his own CONCACAF region. There are only two options here. One is the USA, which hosted the tournament as recently as 1994, generally reckoned to be the least memorable finals of all time. The other is Mexico – and are we seriously to believe that they should stage a World Cup for the third time since it was last hosted in England, the birthplace of football? It is a crazy logic.

A decision about the rotation principle is due to be considered by FIFA in the next few weeks. There should be a swift verdict to end the madness and encourage open bidding for the 2018 World Cup. Four serious contenders would be likely to emerge – England, Australia, China and a joint bid from Holland and Belgium, who co-hosted Euro 2000.

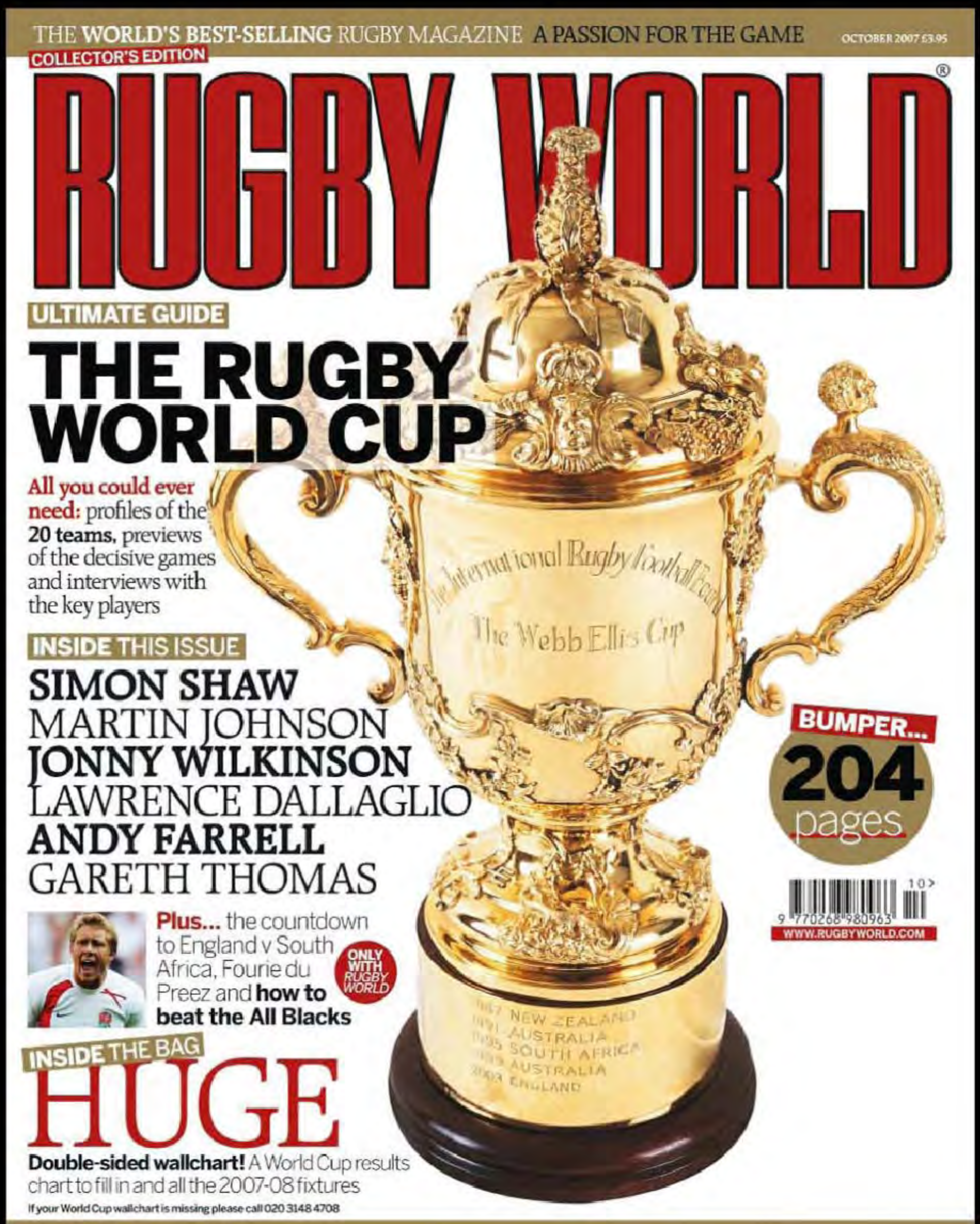
China will show its colours, and maybe its horrors, at next year's Olympics. We won't know how credible their case is until then.

Australia is a wonderful nation with an intense sporting culture, where soccer is growing fast and where major tournaments such as the Olympics and rugby and cricket world cups have flourished. It would be guaranteed to be a spectacular success, but my view is that they can wait until 2022.

For 2018 it has to be Europe. And it has to be a major football nation within Europe to emphasise the status and importance of the World Cup at a crucial juncture in its history.

England has the stadiums, the finance, the infrastructure and the passion. It is the right place from a purely football perspective as well as the wider political ramifications for the future of the game. This is a vital choice for football. And football men like Beckenbauer must win this fight. World Cups should not be awarded to satisfy the vanities of noisy jerks like Warner. ●

Illustration by Dave Semple



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Landmark...the Riesenrad Ferris wheel in Prater Park, where the Ernst-Happel-Stadion also stands

Wheel of fortune

Vienna has an illustrious football history, though the glory days are a long time ago. Peterjon Cresswell takes a turn around the Austrian capital

ALL EYES WILL be on Vienna when the city's famous old Prater stadium hosts the European Championship Final on June 29 next year. The 50,000-capacity ground, renamed the Ernst-Happel-Stadion after the wily coach who died in 1992, will stage seven Euro 2008 games in all. It is set in the large Prater Park, which is also the site of the Riesenrad Ferris wheel immortalised in the film *The Third Man*.

Away from the bright lights of the national stadium, the local game hinges on the rivalry between Vienna's two historic giants, Rapid and FK Austria. Although both finished only in mid-table in the 10-club Bundesliga last season and have made only a slow start to this campaign, the "Wiener" derby is still the most anticipated fixture in the calendar. Their next meeting is on October 20 at Austria's modest Franz-Horr-Stadion.

Between them, Rapid and Austria have won 54 of the 94 league championships. Their history echoes the glory days of Austrian football – and the birth of the European game itself.

Vienna's illustrious football history owes much to Hugo Meisl, a Jewish bank clerk who was enamoured with English culture and the ball game that went with it. Meisl dedicated his life to the development of the game in Vienna and to furthering the cause of international football.

English workers founded Vienna's first

> **Meisl invited English coach Jimmy Hogan to the city, and the local clubs began playing the 'Danubian' style of short, intelligent passing**

two football clubs, First Vienna FC and Vienna Cricket & Football Club (or simply "Cricketer") in the late 1890s. Meisl then formed a branch of the latter, known as Amateure and later FK Austria. Other clubs sprang up around the capital, including 1.Wiener Arbeiter-Fussballklub, formed by workers from a hat factory, who changed the name to Rapid in 1899. Vienna has three clubs languishing in the eastern section of the third division – First Vienna, Admira Wacker Modling and Wiener Sportklub – but all had proud pre-war histories.

Meisl was the instigator of the first international to take place in continental Europe, between Austria and Hungary in Vienna in 1902. He invited English coach Jimmy Hogan to the city, and the local clubs began to play what became known as the Danubian style of short, intelligent passing.

With Vienna at the forefront of the game's technical

Quick fire...Rapid Wien's Mate Bilic celebrates scoring against SV Ried in a league game last season

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Coffeehouse culture

● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Wien-Schwechat airport (+43 7007 22233; www.viennaairport.com) is 18km south-east of the city. The City Airport Train leaves every 30 minutes (16 minutes' journey time, €9/£6). A bus (to Wiener Westbahnhof; €6/£4) and S-Bahn suburban train (line 7 to Wien Mitte; €3/£2) take 20-30 minutes. The city's public transport (www.wienerlinien.at) consists of a U-Bahn metro, S-Bahn suburban trains, trams (top picture) and buses. The Vienna Card (€18.50/£12.50) is valid for transport and admission to many attractions for 72 hours.

● HOTELS

The main tourist office (Albertinaplatz 1; +43 1 2111 4222; www.vienna.info) can make hotel bookings for a nominal fee. Among the upscale options is the Sacher (pictured second top) (Philharmonikerstrasse 4; +43 1 514 560; www.sacher.com; €450/£300), where the cafe is home of the famous chocolate cake Sacher torte. The Starlight Suiten (www.starlighthotels.com) has three bright, spacious downtown hotels for around €200/£135. The Pensions Pertschy (Habsburgstrasse 5; +43 1 534 49; www.pertschy.com; €130/£90) and Christina (Hafnersteiggasse 7; +43 1 533 2961; same website; €120/£80) are conveniently located.

● EATING & DRINKING

The classic Viennese eaterie is the *beisl*, a wood-panelled tavern where locals tuck into hearty boiled beef or pork escalopes. The Gasthaus Wickerl (Porzellangasse 24A; +43 1 317 7489) is a fine example. The Griechenbeisl (Fleischmarkt 11; +43 1 533 1977) dates back to the 1500s. Vienna is also known for its elegant coffeehouses. The Cafe Landtmann (Dr-Karl-Lueger-Ring 4; +43 1 24 100 111) was frequented by Sigmund Freud, the Central (Herrengasse 14; +43 1 533 376 424) by Leon Trotsky, and the Frauenhuber (Himmelpfortgasse 6; +43 1 512 8383) by Mozart.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

The main attraction is Schonbrunn (Schonbrunner Schlosstrasse; +43 1 811 13239; www.schoenbrunn.at), the vast, baroque palace where the Habsburgs resided. At their Imperial Palace, the Hofburg (pictured second bottom), you'll find the Spanish Riding School and the Weitliche und Geistliche Schatzkammer (Schweizerhof; +43 1 525 240; www.khm.at), which houses treasures from the Holy Roman Empire.

● AFTER DARK

U4 (Schonbrunner Strasse 222; +43 1 815 8307; www.u4club.at) and Flex (Donaukanal; +43 1 533 7525; www.flex.at) are the most established nightclubs.

development, Meisl introduced full-time professionalism in 1924 and set up the Mitropa Cup and the International Cup, Central European predecessors of the European Cup and European Championship respectively.

The Austrian national team will probably struggle to qualify from their group at Euro 2008. In contrast, the *Wunderteam* overseen by Meisl eight decades earlier were world class. Led by the slight, skilful Matthias Sindelar, "the Man of Paper", Austria were the purists' favourites to win the 1934 World Cup. With a team mainly comprised of players from FK Austria and Rapid, who had both won the Mitropa Cup, the Austrians beat rivals Hungary but lost in the mud of Milan to eventual winners Italy in the semi-finals.

Mysterious death

Sindelar would never get another chance on the world stage. By the time of the next finals the Nazis had swallowed up Austria into a Greater Germany, for whose joint XI Sindelar refused to appear. In January 1939, the FK Austria star of 15 years was found dead in mysterious circumstances, probably the result of toxic fumes from a gas heater. Meisl had died two years earlier.

During the inter-war period, the *Wiener* derbies showed the best of the Austrian game, the finesse of Sindelar's *Violetten* matched by the working-class savvy of Karl Rappan's Rapid.

After the war, the tactical nous of Ernst Happel, Gerhard Hanappi and Ernst Ocwirk kept both clubs and the Austrian game to the fore. Ocwirk's managerial influence steered FK to more titles. Hanappi went on to become an architect and he designed the new stadium of Rapid, his former club, which opened in 1977.

By then the rise of clubs from Innsbruck, Graz and Salzburg had eclipsed the capital's hegemony. The arrival of owner Frank Stronach in 1999 gave FK Austria the budget they needed to wrest the title back, in 2003. His resignation in 2005 led to the departure of many key players, though Austria managed to regain the title in 2006. Rapid are still the most popular club in the land – but certainly not the richest. ●

Derby win...FK Austria's Lasnik and Mair enjoy beating Rapid

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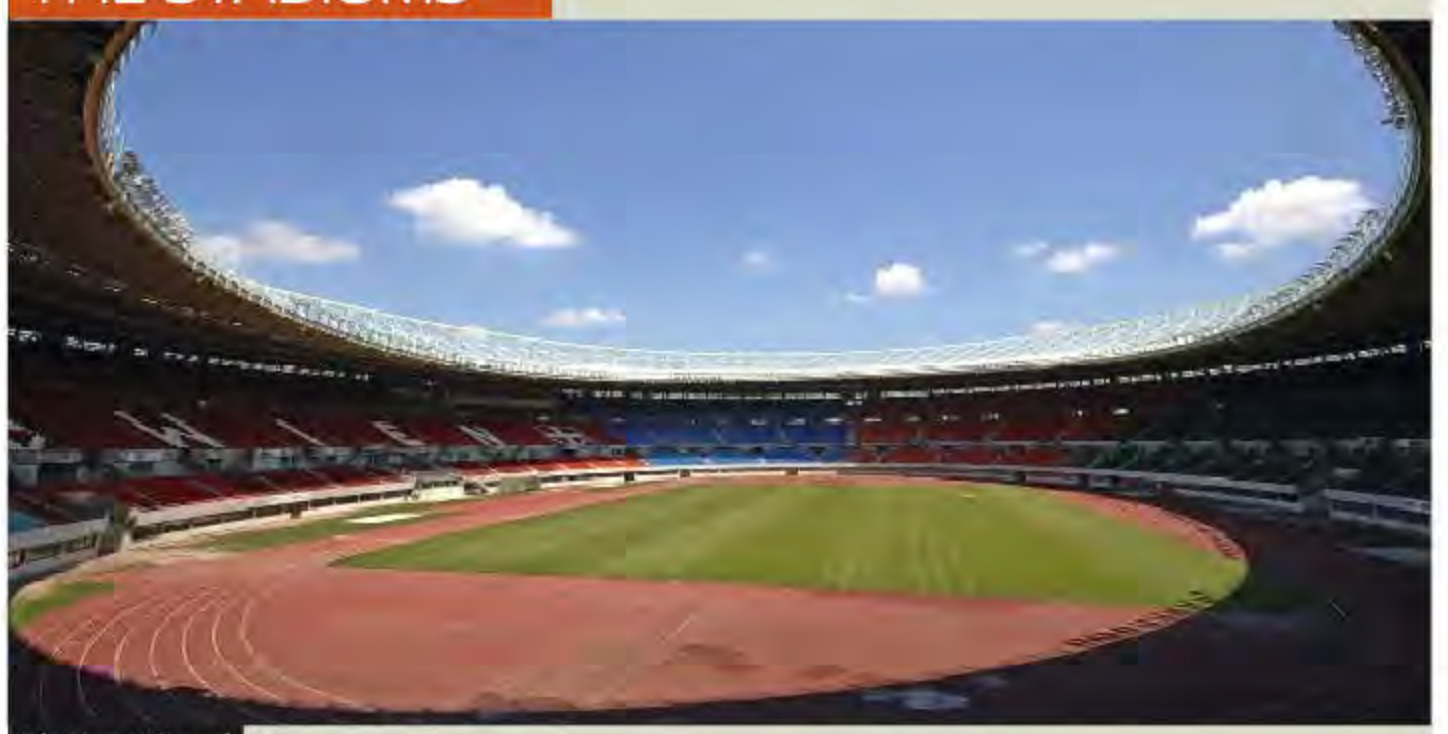
THE STADIUMS


The Ernst-Happel

The Gerhard-Hanappi

A stroll in the park

The national Ernst-Happel-Stadion (www.stadthalle.com/happel_stadion) is set in the Prater Park, a stroll down from Praterstern Wien-Nord on the U1 metro line or from Olympiaplatz on the 21 tram line.

Rapid's Gerhard-Hanappi-Stadion is by the western terminus of the U4 metro line at Hutteldorf. Capacity is 18,500. Tickets are available from the Rapid shop or online at www.skrapid.at.

FK Austria's Franz-Horr-Stadion is at Fischofgasse, on the 67 tram route, three stops (to Altes Landgut) from the U1 metro terminus at Reumannplatz. Capacity is 11,800. Tickets are available online at www.fk-austria.at.

Vienna's three regional league east clubs are spread around the city. First Vienna play at the 5,000-capacity Hohe Warte stadium, near Heiligenstadt station on the U4 or S45 metro lines.

Wiener Sportklub now host more modest teams than Juventus, whom they beat 7-0 in Vienna in the 1958-59 European Cup. Their Hernals stadium can also be reached on the S45 line.

Admira, who also bloomed under Hugo Meisl, are now called Admira Wacker Modling. They play at the Bundesstadion Sudstadt in Maria Enzersdorf. Catch the Badner-Bahn from Karlsplatz, journey time 30 minutes.

The Bundesstadion Sudstadt

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WORLD SERVICE

THE ULTIMATE GLOBAL NEWS AND RESULTS DIGEST

Into the fray...Bayern Munich's Franck Ribery battles with Carlos Alberto of hosts Werder Bremen on the second weekend of the Bundesliga season. Bayern won 4-0

Super Mario

IN RECENT YEARS, the German footballer of the year award has been the exclusive domain of established superstars, such as Michael Ballack, Oliver Kahn, Lothar Matthaus, Oliver Bierhoff and Miroslav Klose, last year's winner. But for 2007 the country's sportswriters plumped for the inexperienced Stuttgart striker Mario Gomez, who had played only 64 Bundesliga games and three for the national team.

The hot favourite had been Werder Bremen's brilliant playmaker Diego. Other names in the frame were Werder midfielder Torsten Frings, league top scorer Theo Gekas of Bochum, evergreen Bayer Leverkusen schemer Bernd Schneider and resurgent Schalke front man Kevin Kuranyi. The success at the polls of Gomez was no foregone conclusion, yet it was his achievements that spoke the loudest. The 22-year-old, who was born in south-west Germany but has a Spanish father, hit 14 goals as Stuttgart came from nowhere to clinch their first domestic title since 1992.

He also showed his excellent all-round game (eight assists), and made a goalscoring debut for the *Nationalmannschaft* in a friendly against Switzerland in February. For those with long memories, his impact smacked of the 1982-83 campaign, when a flurry of goals for Werder from a certain Rudi Voller turned him into player of the year material.

"This is a tremendous honour for me, I'm incredibly proud," said Gomez, who attracted 196 votes to Diego's 175 and Schneider's 156. "Not long ago on TV I saw Michael Ballack being presented with this trophy and said to myself that it would be something else if I could be in his shoes.

"This award belongs as much to my team-mates as myself. Last season, Stuttgart didn't have the best individuals, we had the best team. I wouldn't have scored as many if others had not created the chances for me, and I wouldn't have made goals for the others if they weren't in good positions."

Gomez was recruited from lower league club Ulm in early 2001 and he has shown much persistence in his rise to the top. Former Stuttgart coach Matthias Sammer – twice footballer of the year himself in the mid-1980s – did not particularly rate him, and the same could be said of the next man in charge, Giovanni Trapattoni. The Italian once rewarded the youngster for a late equaliser in a 3-3 draw with Hertha Berlin by demoting him to the reserves.

Even at the start of last term Gomez was anything but assured of a first-team place, and after Stuttgart had lost 3-0 at home to Nurnberg on the opening day, coach Armin Veh publicly criticised him for a lack of movement. The forward says his first instinct was to blame a lack of service, but on checking the video discovered that his boss was in fact correct. The lesson was quickly learned, to the benefit of player, club and country.

"I've had my setbacks but I've always believed in myself," says Gomez, under contract until 2012. "A player can have talent but he also needs consistent performances. I think I've shown both."

Only two Bundesliga sides were eliminated in the first round of the German Cup compared to five last season. Energie Cottbus lost on penalties to third division Rot-Weiss Essen, while Bayer Leverkusen lost 1-0 to St Pauli in Hamburg, midfielder Fabian Boll netting three minutes from time. Leverkusen could have no complaints. Only young keeper Rene Adler and Schneider gave half-decent displays.

Bayern Munich, who finished only fourth in the League last term to miss out on the Champions League, beat Schalke 1-0 in the League Cup Final.

Never before has as much cash been spent on transfers as this summer – £120million. In recent deals, Werder bought Serb defender Dusko Tosic from Sochaux, Hamburg added another Dutchman to their ranks – Feyenoord winger Romeo Castelen – and Stuttgart spent a cool £5.7m on Romanian attacker Ciprian Marica from Shakhtar Donetsk.

Nick Bidwell

No 1 hit...last season, Mario Gomez scored 14 goals to help Stuttgart win the league title and earned his first caps

Crash and carry...Lyon captain Cris is helped from the field after suffering a knee injury in the defeat at Toulouse. He could be out for six months

FRANCE

Lyon look vulnerable

LET'S NOT GET things out of proportion here. It's still early days in Ligue 1. But there has been something really refreshing about the way things have unfolded after the seemingly unending dominance of Lyon these past six campaigns.

After four rounds, the table looked bizarre. Unfashionable Nancy, Lorient and Le Mans led the pack with 10 points, with modest Valenciennes and newly-promoted Strasbourg both riding high, too.

And how the mighty had fallen. Marseille and Paris Saint-Germain were 13th and 15th respectively, while Lyon were 12th, although they did have a game in hand. The champions won their opener, 2-0 at home to Auxerre, but then showed that they are at their most vulnerable in years by losing their next two – 1-0 at Toulouse and 2-1 at Lorient. The former was an all-round nightmare. Their Brazilian captain, Cris, suffered a serious knee injury that has put him out of action for six months, and midfielder Kim Kallstrom was sent off for spitting in the direction of the fourth official. Keeper Gregory Coupet had already been sidelined for four months.

While Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas was up to his old tricks immediately after the Toulouse game, blaming the referee, the anti-Lyon media and anyone else who sprang to mind for his club's woes, new coach Alain Perrin will be more than a little twitchy just now.

Not so Rudi Garcia, the new boss at Le Mans, who's seen his traditionally mid-table team race along with the leading pack, in part thanks to a hat-trick from Brazilian Tulio De Melo that saw off Sochaux, 3-1. De Melo, who scored only twice all last season, had started the game on the bench.

Ligue 1 has suffered the departure of some of its biggest stars, including Franck Ribery and Florent Malouda. And it may not be the end of the name drain. PSG's Portuguese striker Pauleta, league top scorer last season, was benched by coach Paul Le Guen for the start of the campaign and is not happy at his boss's lurch towards a policy of giving youth its head.

One player who's going nowhere after a summer of discontent is Saint-Etienne's mercurial wideman Pascal Feindouno. Courted by a number of foreign clubs, including Birmingham City and Manchester City, the 26-year-old Guinean international probably didn't enjoy the French papers publishing a copy of a pre-contract he'd signed with Saudi club Al Hilal after the broker of the deal said Feindouno had reneged on the agreement, while threatening to take the case to FIFA.

Feindouno's agents claim there was no irregularity because the pre-contract was valid for only 72 hours and the time expired without their man signing a fully-fledged deal.

Feindouno would have earned a whopping £3.3million over three years in Saudi – not including bonuses. So why didn't he go? Because his wife didn't fancy it over there, apparently. "I'm at Saint-Etienne and I'm thinking only about football," Feindouno said. He didn't, of course, mention how much Saint-Etienne had ended up paying him to extend his stay with them.

Howard Johnson

HOLLAND

Super Cup win, Sneijder loss

The Real thing...Wesley Sneijder left Ajax for Madrid at a cost of £18million

CUP HOLDERS Ajax took revenge for their narrow defeat in the league title race by beating champions PSV in the Super Cup. The Amsterdammers had missed out on the championship by a single goal and, appropriately, that was the margin in the Super Cup, Spanish midfielder Gabri scoring the winner just before half-time.

The game was devalued by the fact that both teams had some notable absentees. PSV were without three strikers – Jefferson Farfan, Arouna Kone and Danko Lazovic; Ajax were missing midfielders Edgar Davids and Wesley Sneijder. Davids broke his shinbone in a pre-season match while, much to the annoyance of the Ajax board, he wasn't wearing shinguards. Sneijder was suspended but had also been given the day off since he was in the midst of a transfer saga, at the end of which he joined Real Madrid.

Sneijder had made no secret of his desire to move abroad but earlier this summer a projected deal with Valencia had fallen through because the clubs couldn't agree on the fee. The midfielder then said he wouldn't mind staying at Ajax for another year. However, Real Madrid suddenly turned up, offering £16million. Ajax responded by saying Sneijder was only on offer at £20m.

There then followed an awkward press conference at which director Martin Van Geel stated that the clubs were a long way off reaching an agreement and that Ajax would stick to their valuation, while coach Henk Ten Cate admitted that he was already reckoning on being without Sneijder. The next day, Madrid, who had said their £16m offer was final, withdrew, only to reach an agreement with Ajax of £18m 24 hours later.

Ajax also had a wrangle over the signing of Luis Suarez from Groningen. The 19-year-old Uruguayan striker had been earmarked as the successor to Liverpool-bound Ryan Babel, but Groningen turned down Ajax's £4m offer, saying they wanted £6m. Suarez promptly took the matter to court but was told to respect his contract with Groningen. However, negotiations were resumed and Suarez eventually joined Ajax for £5.4m.

Feyenoord's Royston Drenthe, the best player at this summer's European Under-21 Championship, was another to force his way out, also joining Real Madrid. The midfielder had threatened to take his case to court after the Rotterdam club refused to countenance a move to the Bernabeu. However, before the case could be scheduled the matter was solved, Drenthe joining the Spanish champions for £8.5m.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

PORTUGAL

Silver for Sporting

Cup-holders Sporting Lisbon beat champions Porto in the Super Cup, new signing Marat Izmailov hitting the only goal from 30 metres. Porto struggled to create chances and appeared to miss defender Pepe, sold to Real Madrid.

Benfica were thrown into turmoil by the sudden departure of coach Fernando Santos. His replacement is former Spain boss Jose Antonio Camacho, back for a second spell. The squad has been weakened by the departure of winger Simao Sabrosa to Atletico Madrid and midfielder Manuel Fernandes, who re-joined Everton after last season's loan spell. New signing Freddy Adu gave a decent showing on his debut, a 2-1 win over FC Copenhagen in the Champions League qualifiers.

There was a big upset in the first round of the inaugural League Cup, with top division Academica losing to third division Fatima.

Pedro Pinto

AUSTRIA

Don't change a thing!

Smalltown club Mattersburg were top of the league and still unbeaten after six games having started with the same 11 players each time. The team also beat Kazakhstan's Aktobe 4-3 on aggregate in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round

to set up a tie with Swiss league runners-up Basle. "Things are running smoothly in domestic football, so we can concentrate on the UEFA Cup," said coach Franz Lederer.

Mattersburg's success is based on team continuity and good youth development. Lederer proudly proclaimed: "We usually play with nine Austrians" – seven of which have won caps at some level with the country.

To give youth development a further boost, the city council has agreed to build a youth academy for the club. "The negotiations were highly constructive and we are very optimistic," said club president Martin Pucher, who stayed in good spirits even after a break-in at the clubhouse. He quipped: "The robbers cannot have been Mattersburg fans because they didn't steal any merchandise."

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Drogheda in the clear

Drogheda United are well on course to win their first league title. They beat closest challengers St Patrick's Athletic 2-0 at home to establish an eight-point lead with a game in hand.

Cork City striker Roy O'Donovan has joined Sunderland, managed by fellow Corkman Roy Keane. O'Donovan had looked set to join Fulham.

Former rogue trader Nick Leeson has been appointed chief executive of Galway United following a spell as the club's commercial manager.

The FA has sold its Merrion Square headquarters in Dublin city centre and will move to new offices in Abbotstown in the west of the city at the end of October.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Rohrer heads Vaduz buys

Vaduz have been busy in the transfer market over the summer, with international striker Raphael Rohrer from Eschen Mauren heading their list of buys.

Other arrivals were left-back Pascal Cerrone (from St Gallen), striker Tim Grossklaus and goalkeeper Yann Sommer (both Basle) and Brazilian midfielder Alewandre da Silva (Spanish second division side Lorca).

Long-serving keeper Carlos Silva has left Vaduz for Eschen Mauren, Pape Faye for Thun and Miguel Portillo has returned to Young Boys after a loan period.

Eschen Mauren have replaced coach Dietmar Metzler with ex-Schaan boss Roland Jager.

Graeme Crawford

BELGIUM

Lierse facing the end

Middle man...Brugge new boy Karel Geraerts

FOUR-TIMES CHAMPIONS Lierse are fighting for their survival because of huge financial trouble. The club, who were relegated last season, were set to be denied access to their Herman Vanderpoorten stadium if they did not pay a debt to the local authorities by the end of August. Players have gone without pay and the two most recent signings cannot be registered to appear in league games until there is an injection of funds.

In contrast, Belgium's big two clubs, Anderlecht and Club Brugge, both began the season in fine fettle, winning their opening two fixtures. Anderlecht, the champions and celebrating their centenary season, have been strengthened by the signing of Brazilian midfielder Triguinho, Czech midfielder Jan Polak and French forward Cyril Thereau.

"I am confident this team can do better than last season," said coach Franky Vercauteren. "But we have to demand more individually from the players and also get more efficiency from the team."

Jacky Mathijssen, the new coach of Cup-holders Brugge, has made sweeping changes. Stepan Kucera and Antolin Alcaraz form a new central defensive partnership, Jeroen Simaeys and Karel Geraerts join the midfield, while strikers Dusan Djokic and Francois Sterchele are expected to compensate up front for the loss of Bosko Balaban, who has returned to Dinamo Zagreb.

Brugge players were in the wars during their 3-1 Super Cup defeat by Anderlecht. Midfielder Gertjan De Mets is expected to be out for three months after tearing cruciate knee ligaments, while Kucera broke an eye socket, though he can continue playing by wearing a protective mask. The club have also lost midfielder Koen Daerden for several months after he underwent knee surgery.

Genk, last season's league runners-up, suffered what coach Hugo Broos described as "a small disaster" when losing to Sarajevo on away goals in the Champions League second qualifying round.

Nicholas Harling

Under pressure...Basle's Koji Nakata

SWITZERLAND

Basle suffer back trouble

BASLE, LAST SEASON'S runners-up, suffered a humiliating 5-1 loss at Young Boys in the fourth round of the league campaign, prompting coach Christian Gross to say: "We were well and truly thrashed; our defence fell apart. We have to bolster it urgently."

Basle missed stalwart Boris Smiljanic, now at Grasshopper. The new central defensive pairing of Japanese international Koji Nakata and Swede Daniel Majstorovic struggled as Young Boys striker Joao Paulo strolled past them to score twice. Nakata's day went from bad to worse when he was sent off in the 69th minute after a second booking. The defeat ended Basle's 21-match unbeaten league run.

Defending champions Zurich went top on goal difference when inflicting a 3-1 defeat on St Gallen, who have lost all their games.

Thun's new Dutch coach Rene Van Eck had a troubled start as his side picked up only four points.

Ivar von Rulach

SWEDEN

Ice-cool Berg goes Dutch

Striking impression...Berg's form with IFK earned him a move to Groningen

MARCUS BERG has hogged the headlines this summer with his ice-cool finishing for IFK Gothenburg. But after hitting 14 goals, practically half of IFK's total tally this term, the Under-21 international striker has moved on to Holland's Groningen.

Berg's farewell match turned out to be the 5-0 win away to Kalmar. He scored but also picked up a one-match suspension, which ruled him out of his planned last appearance, at home to Djurgardens.

National coach Lars Lagerback surprisingly opted not to include Berg in the senior Sweden squad for the friendly against the USA. He said: "Marcus has shown good touches, but our established forwards are still a bit ahead of him." But many pundits criticised the coach's decision to choose veteran forward Rade Prica, with AaB Aalborg in Denmark, ahead of the youngster.

Helsingborgs' sale of promising midfielder Babis Stefanidis to Malmo enraged fans, some of whom reportedly sent the player death threats. Hammarby have also had trouble with a hooligan element among their fans. A league match against Malmo had to be suspended because of crowd problems, and there were also ugly scenes in the Stockholm derby against Djurgardens, with Hammarby fans shouting racist abuse at their opponents' keeper, Gambian Dembo Tourray.

Pentti Hietanen

DENMARK

Randers top under Todd

Former England star Colin Todd had a dream start as coach of Randers, who won their first four games of the Superliga campaign and drew their next to head the table.

Young striker Thomas Dalgaard was the star performer, scoring seven goals. It was an unlikely but hugely welcome development in a league totally dominated by FC Copenhagen last season. Todd puts the success down to hard work and discipline, which his assistant, ex-midfield hardman Stig Tofting, is no doubt helping to instil.

Horsens, another smalltown club, also had a good, unbeaten start, winning two games and drawing the other three.

In contrast, 2005 champions Brondby have continued to struggle, with only one victory in their first five matches.

Jim Holden

NORWAY

Brann rise after Stabaek stutter

Complacent Stabaek lost the league lead after picking up only two points from their first four games after the mid-summer break.

They lost 3-0 to closest challengers Brann on the first day back – Thorstein Helstad hitting all the goals – to allow the Bergen side to overtake them. Brann went on to beat champions Rosenborg 3-2. Scot Robbie Winters scored twice in the first half, with former Leeds player Eirik Bakke hitting Brann's third.

Valerenga coach Petter Myhre resigned in July because of poor results, with assistant Harald Aabrekk taking over for the remainder of the season.

Start surprisingly sold Stefan Barlin, David Nielsen and Alex Valencia during the summer break, though they purchased striker Ole Martin Arst from

Tromso. The veteran scored against his old club and Stabaek to earn vital points and push Start up the table.

Rosenborg were forced to sell forward Daniel Braaten to Bolton as he made it clear he would not renew his contract. However, Yssouf Kone has shown he is more than capable of filling Braaten's boots.

Sigurd Odegaard

ICELAND

Thordarson toppled

KR's Teitur Thordarson was the first coaching casualty of the season, sacked in July after 18 months in charge with the team bottom of the table. His replacement is veteran Logi Olafsson, who has been out of coaching since being relieved of his duties with the national team in autumn 2005. Olafsson has won the League with two clubs – Vikingur and IA.

Cup holders Keflavik were knocked out by Breidablik in this season's quarter-finals.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Jensen in for Jelle

Former Danish international Viggo Jensen has been named national coach following the departure of Jelle Goes. The former Bayern Munich player is on a six-month contract.

Levadia Tallinn, the clear leaders in the championship, lost on away goals to Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League second qualifying round. Levadia beat the Serbians 2-1 at home in the first leg, but lost 1-0 in the return.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Rubins is back

Midfielder Andrejs Rubins has returned to Latvia on a six-month loan with Metalurgs Liepaja after seven years abroad – with Crystal Palace, Spartak Moscow and Shinnik Yaroslavl.

Metalurgs were eight points clear of FK Riga in the League. Champions Ventspils were well adrift.

Andres Must

WALES

Euro whitewash

All four Welsh clubs exited European competition at the first hurdle. The New Saints beat Ventspils of Latvia 3-2 in the first leg, but lost on away goals after going down 2-1 in the return.

Rhyl and Llanelli also went out on away goals in the UEFA Cup, against Haka of Finland and Vetra of Lithuania respectively. Carmarthen were crushed 14-3 by Norway's Brann Bergen.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

FA announces top-flight shake-up

The FA has announced that the Premier Division will be reduced from 16 clubs to 12 from next season. But league position will be just one of the qualifying criteria. The others are "sporting achievement", spectator facilities and attendance figures, financial management and infrastructure.

Roy Kitson

FINLAND

Time up for Litmanen?

Headache...Finland great Jari Litmanen has suffered a serious Achilles injury

HAVE WE SEEN the last of Jari Litmanen, the best-ever Finnish footballer and record caps holder? The 36-year-old has been hampered by various injuries over the years. However, he has now suffered a serious Achilles tendon injury that may keep him sidelined for six months. Litmanen duly terminated his contract with his Swedish club, Malmo.

That is bad news for the Finnish national team and coach Roy Hodgson. Litmanen's inspired performances helped the side make such a fine start in the Euro 2008 qualifiers last autumn. The Englishman has not given up hope, though, saying: "Few players have Jari's passion for the game. I would not write him off just yet."

MyPa sacked coach Ilkka Makela after a run of poor results. He is replaced by assistant Janne Hypponen.

HJK Helsinki signed international midfielder Tuomas Haapala from Norway's Sandefjord.

Pentti Hietanen

Debut goal...Daniel Cousin

SCOTLAND

Rangers roar away

THE EARLY indications are that this season's championship will be much more competitive than the last, which Celtic won at a canter.

Rangers are enjoying a revival under Walter Smith. The former Scotland boss has bolstered the squad by buying Jean-Claude Darcheville, DaMarcus Beasley, Lee McCulloch and Daniel Cousin, the latter scoring on his debut – a 2-0 home win over St Mirren. Rangers had opened with a 3-0 victory at Inverness the previous weekend.

Celtic managed only a goalless draw at home to Kilmarnock, though they then beat Falkirk 4-1 away. Manager Gordon Strachan has so many strikers it may be a problem keeping them happy. Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink, Kenny Miller, Derek Riordan, Scott McDonald and Chris Killen are all in the reckoning.

Alan Fairley

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worldsoccer.com

Fight club...Partizan fans clash with riot police at the end of the game against Zrinjski in Mostar. The trouble led to the team's UEFA Cup expulsion

SERBIA

Partizan pay the price

PARTIZAN BELGRADE outclassed Zrinjski of Bosnia-Herzegovina 11-1 on aggregate in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round but were then expelled because their fans had rioted during and after the first leg in Mostar and because of a number of similar incidents in the past.

Originally, UEFA disqualified Partizan after the first leg, a 6-1 win. But the club appealed, and UEFA then took the odd decision to put its verdict on hold and allow the second leg to be played. Four days after the Belgrade game UEFA confirmed the sanctions it had imposed in the first place, with Zrinjski going through in Partizan's place. At the same time the European body sent a warning to Serbian teams in general that any more incidents involving their fans, including racial abuse, would mean a bar from continental competition.

Red Star Belgrade replaced coach Bosko Djurovski only 24 hours before the start of the league season because the team had performed poorly in warm-up games and only just managed to scrape into the Champions League third qualifying round, on away goals against Estonia's Levadia Tallinn. Djurovski had originally taken the reins on an interim basis after Dusan Bajevic departed last March. But after Red Star went on to win the Double, he was given the chance to keep the job.

Djurovski's replacement is Milorad Kosanovic, who coached Red Star in 1997-98 and then led China's Dalian Shide to three domestic championships. However, Red Star began the league campaign poorly, managing only a 0-0 draw at home to promoted Cukaricki.

Vladimir Novak

MONTENEGRO

Zeta make their mark

Zeta's very young team made a good impression in the Champions League, first eliminating Kaunas of Lithuania 5-4 on aggregate and then making things tough for Rangers, especially in the first leg at Ibrox. The Montenegrins eventually went out 3-0 on aggregate.

Buducnost lost 2-1 on aggregate to Hajduk Split but filed a complaint to UEFA because the Croats had fielded an unregistered player, Drago Gabric, in the first leg, a 1-1 draw, in Podgorica. Buducnost had expected to have the tie awarded to them 3-0, but instead UEFA simply fined Hajduk £4,150.

Vladimir Novak

GREECE

Fair game?

Olympiakos chairman Socrates Kokkalis is at the centre of a controversy after Intralot, the gaming systems supply company he owns, signed a £65million upgrade deal with the country's gambling operator, OPAP. Many pundits believe the relationship is far too cosy and that Olympiakos may unfairly benefit.

In July, OPAP scrapped an international tender for the project, opting instead to give it to Intralot, which has handled a number of OPAP projects over the years. OPAP, of which the Greek state owns 34 per cent, has the exclusive right to organise sports betting and lotteries in Greece until 2020.

Lou Economopoulos

ALBANIA

Halili points finger at co-owner

Refik Halili, one of FK Tirana's four owners, believes that his side's elimination from the Champions League by Domzale of Slovenia resulted

from match-fixing. Tirana lost the first leg, 1-0 away, and Halili claims that a few hours before the return match a reliable source told him that one of the other owners had "sold" the second leg. Tirana duly lost 2-1.

"We were a better team than Domzale, but we didn't manage to go through," Halili said. "I think that some of the players were happy with the elimination. Some of the other owners may know more than me."

Halili added that he had strong suspicions about one of his co-owners, but refused to say which. "I thought it would be harder for Tirana to suffer corruption because we have four owners, instead of one, but now I have to admit that this isn't true," Halili said.

Gezim Nushi

MACEDONIA

Situation grave for Vardar fans

Vardar Skopje fans made a novel protest about the club authorities – digging a grave during the night in the middle of the City stadium pitch and planting in it a cross on which they had written: "RIP 2007 Uprava" (management).

The damage was superficial and easily repaired, but the message was clear for Vardar director Darko Pancev and main backer Slobodan Vujcic. Although Vardar led the domestic league after winning their first two games of the season, they were eliminated from the UEFA Cup in the first qualifying round by Anorthosis of Cyprus, a result that led to the sacking of coach Dragi Kanatlarovski. Vardar also sold two important players over the summer – Brazilian Dos Santos Wandeir, club top scorer last term, to Naval of Portugal, and midfielder Ertan Demiri, to local rivals Rabotnicki.

Pancev and Vujcic are managing the club in the absence of president Borce Ristevski, who has been arrested for alleged corruption relating to the building of a hotel near the stadium.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Super silver for Hibernians

Cup holders Hibernians beat champions Marsaxlokk 3-1 in the Super Cup, to add to their victory in the season-opening Euro Challenge Cup.

However, the Paolites crashed out of the UEFA Cup, 7-1 on aggregate to Vojvodina of Serbia, as did Sliema Wanderers (7-0 to Bulgaria's Litex Lovech). Marsaxlokk also suffered a heavy defeat in the Champions League, going down 9-1 to Bosnia's Sarajevo.

Valletta have made a raft of signings, including international defender Kenneth Scicluna from Birkirkara and Argentinian goalgetter Sebastian Monesterolo, back at the club after joining Al Kuwait midway through last season.

Valletta's other big "acquisition" is Victor Schriha as president. He oversaw Marsaxlokk's first league title success last season.

Domenico Aquilina

CROATIA

Hajduk new boys fail to gel

CHAMPIONS Dinamo Zagreb kicked off the new league campaign with four wins out of four, despite the sale of important players Eduardo da Silva to Arsenal and Vedran Corluka to Manchester City. In contrast, arch-rivals Hajduk Split dropped four points having just bought numerous reinforcements – Dynamo Kyiv trio Florin Cernat, Maris Verpakovskis and Goran Sablic, Igor Tudor from Juventus, and Srdjan Andric from Panathinaikos.

As usual, Dinamo and Hajduk are the only title candidates in what is a generally uncompetitive top flight. So it was a surprise when Igor Stimac, the president of the league committee, pushed through a motion to increase the size from 12 clubs to 16.

Zdravko Reic

Slow start...Goran Sablic and his fellow new signings at Hajduk have not sparked

Pressure...Beitar coach Yitzhak Shum

ISRAEL

Shum mistake?

NEW BEITAR Jerusalem coach Yitzhak Shum was under pressure even before the league campaign kicked off after his team lost to FC Copenhagen, 2-1 on aggregate, in the Champions League second qualifying round.

Shum, who enjoyed much success at Maccabi Haifa, had been appointed specifically to steer Beitar into the group stage, the holy grail for ambitious owner Arkady Gaidamak.

Shum replaced Yossi Mizrahi, who was fired despite the fact that Beitar won the League by 10 clear points. Gaidamak felt the team lacked style and clearly did not believe that Mizrahi could succeed in Europe.

Beitar's main summer signing was Chilean Cristian Alvarez.

Derek Fattal

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Hot streak...Wisla Krakow have started the season in blistering form

POLAND

Wisla's winning start

WISLA KRAKOW threw down the gauntlet as they began their attempt to recapture the league title, winning all their first three games without conceding a goal. They kicked off by defeating defending champions Zaglebie Lubin 1-0 away then demolished Korona Kielce 4-0 and beat Gornik Zabrze 2-0, both at home.

The team's star performers were Pawel Brozek, who scored four of the goals, and left-sided midfielder Kamil Kosowski. The latter returned to Wisla, with whom he won the title in 2001 and 2003, after four unsuccessful seasons at Kaiserslautern, Southampton and Chievo.

Legia Warsaw also won their first three games and without conceding to trail Wisla on goal difference. They showed their potential when defeating Gornik Zabrze 3-0 away but the fact that they beat Cracovia Krakow and Groclin Dyskobolia by only 1-0 at home drew criticism. New coach Jan Urban responded by saying: "If you cannot score more goals, you must be happy with the three points." Urban previously coached the youth and reserve teams at Osasuna, where he was also a player.

Lech Poznan, who were third with six points, topped the table in marketing terms, having sold 12,000 season tickets – a record for a Polish club.

Promoted Zaglebie Sosnowiec lost their first three games and already know that they are going straight back down as part of their punishment for their involvement in Poland's match-fixing scandal. The club, who have also been docked four points, will drop into the third division if they finish in the relegation zone this term, or the second division if they finish higher.

Poland are still without a Champions League group representative since 1996 after Zaglebie Lubin lost 3-1 on aggregate to Steaua Bucharest in the second qualifying round.

Dariusz Kurowski

RUSSIA

Spartak eye 10th title

Spartak Moscow put themselves on course for a 10th Russian league title after a run of six wins out of seven games. The sequence included a 3-1 defeat of former leaders Zenit St Petersburg and coincided with the appointment of former Spartak and national team keeper Stanislav Cherchesov as coach. Cherchesov, who had been Spartak's director of football, replaced Vladimir Fedotov, fired after a five-game winless run.

Third-placed FC Moscow made a transfer coup by signing Argentinian Under-20 World Cup star Maxi Moralez from Racing Club.

The playmaker, who joins compatriots Hector Bracamonte and Pablo Barrientos, becomes the Russian League's smallest player at 1.61m.

Victor Gusev

BULGARIA

Levski crash out

Levski Sofia, who had high hopes of reaching the Champions League group stage for the second season running, did not even make the third qualifying round. They crashed out to Finland's

Tampere United, losing home and away, both 1-0. The players apologised to the fans.

Levski are also at the centre of a row about international defender Stanislav Angelov, now at Bundesliga side Energie Cottbus. Levski are refusing to pass on his documentation because they feel the player went against the terms of his contract when making contact with Energie after the end of last season. Angelov's contract with Levski, signed in 2001, included a buyout clause of £120,000, but the club valued him recently at £550,000.

Energie boss Steffen Heidrich claimed that Angelov had been threatened by phone that if he plays for Energie, he will be dropped from the Bulgaria squad.

Rumen Paytashev

ROMANIA

Rapid fire at Buzau

Newly-promoted Gloria Buzau were searching for their third coach of the season after just three league games. Player-coach Viorel Ion was relieved of his duties after the club lost their opening two matches, and his replacement, Ilie Stan, who won his only game in charge, was fired after the board said he had failed to offer a full explanation about his decision to drop four players. Ion had spoken of the "board's intolerable interference in team affairs" after his reign ended.

Two referees have been handed indefinite bans after allegedly showing favouritism to top teams Steaua Bucharest and Dinamo Bucharest. It was deemed that the decisions of Sebastian Coltescu and Augustus Constantin – the latter the son of Gheorghe Constantin, head of the Central Refereeing Commission – changed the results of their matches. However, although the pair were banned from domestic soccer, both officiated continental matches soon after their suspension.

The Professional League cleared two Ceahlaul Piatra Neamt players – Dejan Rusmir and Vojislav Vranjikovic – sent off by Coltescu against Steaua on the opening day of the season after studying TV evidence.

Five Dinamo Bucharest fans were stabbed in Rome in the hours before their side's Champions League first leg tie against Lazio, a 1-1 draw.

Radu Timofte

HUNGARY

Honved lead the way

Cup holders Honved, the club made famous by Ferenc Puskas but who last won the championship in 1993, made an excellent start to the season, winning all their first four league games. They also reached the UEFA Cup second qualifying round by beating Moldova's Nistru Otaci 5-4 on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate draw. Goalkeeper Ivan Toth was the hero, saving three kicks in the shoot-out.

Debrecen lost narrowly, 1-0 on aggregate, to Elfsborg of Sweden in the Champions League second qualifying round after having a goal controversially ruled out in the second leg. Striker Dorge Kouemaha had apparently scored after getting to a high ball before Elfsborg keeper Johan Wiland. However, Swiss referee Claudio Circhetta ruled that he had fouled the keeper.

Peterjon Cresswell

On his way...Matuzalem

CZECH REPUBLIC

Slavia turned off by "insulting" TV offer

You had to be there...Slavia's game against Zilina was not shown

FAR-FLUNG Slavia Prague fans were unable to watch their side's Champions League defeat of Slovakia's Zilina on television after the club rejected what it called an "insulting" rights offer from public broadcaster Ceska Televize. According to Slavia's general director, Petr Dolezal, CT offered just £24 to show the second, home leg.

Slavia's Slovak keeper Matus Kozacik has surprisingly joined Sparta. The 23-year-old was displaced as Slavia No 1 by Michal Vorel last season but had been expected to move abroad. Kozacik's arrival prompted Sparta's former Under-21 international Zdenek Zlamal to join title rivals Slovan Liberec.

Central defender Jan Simunek, who captained the Czech Republic to the Under-20 World Cup Final this summer, has left Sparta for Wolfsburg. Under-20 goalkeeper Radek Petr signed a four-year deal with Italian side Parma. The Banik Ostrava youngster had been on loan at third division Mutenice and had never played in the Czech top flight.

In the League, only Ostrava, Slavia and Teplice had 100 per cent records after two games.

Sam Beckwith

UKRAINE

Matuzalem consternation

SHAKHTAR DONETSK splashed out in the transfer market (£27million on Nery Castillo, Cristiano Lucarelli and Ilsinho) after the midfield and attack were severely weakened by the departure of Matuzalem (Zaragoza), Elano (Manchester City) and Ciprian Marica (Stuttgart).

Matuzalem's exit was the most shocking since Shakhtar had made him the best-paid player in the country, on £100,000 a month. The club claimed the Brazilian, the Ukrainian League's best player of last season, had broken the terms of his contract when signing for Zaragoza and said they would be seeking sanctions against Matuzalem and the Spanish club from FIFA.

Dynamo Kyiv made their worst start to a league campaign, with just one win, three draws and a defeat in their first five games. The defeat was inflicted by Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk, who kicked off with five straight wins.

Oleg Zadernovsky

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ARGENTINA

River of blood

Back to Spain...Riquelme has returned to Villarreal after his loan spell at Boca Juniors

THE BATTLE FOR leadership of River Plate's hooligan gang that began last season erupted again as the new league campaign got under way, and claimed another life. Gonzalo Acro, a leading member of one of the two factions, died two days after being shot in the head by a rival member.

The incident did not take place near the club, who immediately said they could not be held responsible. However, the connection between club officials and their hooligan fans has been proved, and the fight for leadership was mainly about who would get their hands on the free tickets, transport and even cash given to them by the club.

The judge investigating the death, Luis Rodriguez, ordered River's home league game against Newell's Old Boys to be postponed, which meant that the team did not play in either of the first two rounds of games – River's opener was also put back as they were still on tour.

Meanwhile, another judge, Marcelo Romero, has once again requested that the government intervenes in the running of the FA since he believes it has failed to take the necessary steps to bring hooliganism under control. But such a development would put Argentinian sides at risk of being banned from international competition since FIFA does not permit outside interference in football matters.

Before the season began it had been decided between the FA and the sports security committee that top-division matches would be played without visiting fans in the hope that it would reduce hooliganism. But after protests, it was decided instead that half the usual number of away fans could attend. All lower-division matches are played in front of only home fans.

Actually, fewer visiting fans have been going to matches for some time now as clubs have been handing fewer and fewer tickets to their rivals. However, Raul Gamez, the former Velez Sarsfield president and principal challenger to federation president Julio Grondona, is against the trend. He said: "Reducing the number of tickets for visiting fans only plays into the hands of the hooligans as the black market price will go up."

The new season began without the previous campaign's two leading goalkeepers – River Plate's Juan Pablo Carrizo and Independiente's Oscar Ustari – and three of its leading scorers – Velez Sarsfield's Mauro Zarate, Newell's Old Boys' Oscar Cardozo and Estudiantes de La Plata's Mario Pavone – who have all moved abroad. But the most significant absentee was playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme, who had been at Boca Juniors only on loan and has now returned to Villarreal. Boca are also likely to badly miss defensive stalwarts Clemente Rodriguez and Daniel Diaz, two other departees.

Estudiantes, last season's opening champions, also lost midfielder Jose Sosa, while closing champions San Lorenzo sold Ezequiel Lavezzi and Cristian Ledesma. Bernardo Romeo returns from Portugal.

Independiente made a blazing start, scoring eight goals in winning their first two games to head the table.

Eric Weil

International man of mystery...Bielsa has spent time out at his farm since quitting as Argentina coach three years ago

CHILE

'Hermit' Bielsa back at the helm

MARCELO BIELSA, one of the world's most mysterious and intriguing coaches, is making a welcome return to the touchline after three hermitic years, at the helm of the Chilean national team.

The man who led Argentina at the 2002 World Cup replaces Nelson Acosta, who resigned immediately after the Copa America.

Bielsa, renowned for his tortured expression, has barely been seen in public since quitting the Argentina post three years ago. He appears to have spent most of his time on his farm outside Rosario, studying his immense collection of videos and football books.

Bielsa's great love is for tactics but he has accepted a job where motivational and disciplinary qualities are just as likely to be needed. Chile's in-fighting and disciplinary problems began last year when Mark Gonzalez and Reinaldo Navia were sent home from a European tour after the association said that women were found in their hotel room in Dublin. The troubles continued when various players slagged each other off in the press following a 4-0 defeat by Brazil in Stockholm, and reached a peak during this summer's Copa America, with the infamous breakfast incident in Puerto Ordaz. Six players, including mercurial playmaker Jorge Valdivia, were given 20-match international bans by the Chilean federation after food was reportedly thrown around the dining room of the team hotel and staff were insulted.

There are also doubts about the availability of striker Luis Jimenez, who dropped out of the Copa America after being left on the bench for a warm-up game.

Brian Homewood

VENEZUELA

Crowds flock to new stadiums

The country's new-look championship, which has been expanded from 10 teams to 18 to take advantage of the stadiums built for the Copa America, had a successful start, with a total attendance of over 100,000 for the nine games on the opening weekend. The biggest crowd, 25,000, saw Deportivo Tachira thrash Estrella Roja 6-1. There were also 20,000-plus crowds at Anzoategui v UA Maracaibo in Puerto La Cruz and Mineros de Guayana v El Vigia in Puerto Ordaz. Before the Copa, most games attracted only a few hundred people.

Venezuela built three new stadiums for the Copa and refurbished another six, although some were used at the tournament when still not complete. Barquisimeto's Metropolitano stadium, which staged two games, will be available for club games from October.

More than 70 foreign players are taking part in the new league campaign. The most curious signing was by Guaros de Lara, where former Colombia goalkeeper Rene Higuita has made yet another comeback at the age of 41.

Brian Homewood

PERU

Uribe out, Del Solar in

FORMER PERU midfielder Jose Del Solar has been appointed national coach, replacing Julio Cesar Uribe, who was sacked after only four months at the helm. Uribe had been appointed after agreeing to the federation's hare-brained scheme to play home World Cup qualifying matches at high altitude in the Andean city of Cusco.

This idea had to be shelved anyway when FIFA banned internationals at over 2,500 metres above sea level (Cusco stands at 3,400m), and Uribe's days were clearly numbered when Peru were thrashed 4-0 by Argentina in the Copa America quarter-finals. Uribe, who was in his second spell in the job, had hardly made himself popular by declaring that in future Peru would base their game on blanket defence.

The highly articulate Del Solar, 39, is well regarded and led Sporting Cristal to the Peruvian championship in his first year as coach, 2005. He was most recently in charge of Universidad Catolica in Chile.

One of his first moves was to bring back midfielder Nolberto Solano, who has not played for Peru for more than two years and is a fierce critic of the federation. "Peru can't afford the luxury of not picking Solano," Del Solar said.

Brian Homewood

On the defensive...Uribe

MLS finally gets Latin rhythm

AT LONG LAST, the Major League Soccer coaches are beginning to widen their horizons and starting to entertain the idea that they can recruit Latin American players.

That a league dominated by European, or European-oriented, coaches would show a Euro-bias in its player signings is to be expected. But there has been a clear reluctance to sign players from Latin America. Now, behind the all-enveloping news of yet another European signing – I mean David Beckham, should you be wondering – something akin to a revolution has been taking place.

This season more than a dozen top-line Latino players have arrived. Possibly, this was prompted by the change in MLS rules that allows each club to sign one "designated player" outside the salary cap regulations – the so-called Beckham rule. That rule has brought Colombia's Juan Pablo Angel to New York Red Bulls and Mexico's Cuauhtemoc Blanco to Chicago Fire.

But most of the Latino arrivals are regular signings, and they form an impressive list. Long-time Boca Juniors star Guillermo Barros Schelotto is at Columbus Crew, where coach Sigi Schmid already has Chilean defender Marcos Gonzalez, Costa Rican forward Andy Herron and the delightfully-named Brazilian youngster Ricardo Virtuoso.

DC United coach Tom Soehn has added two much-travelled Brazilians – midfielder Fred, from Melbourne Victory, and forward Luciano Emilio, who has played in Honduras, Germany and Mexico.

Argentinian Carlos Marinelli, formerly with Middlesbrough, has joined Kansas City Wizards, while Los Angeles Galaxy, in need of someone to profit from Beckham's crosses, have signed Honduran forward Carlos Pavon.

At FC Dallas, Northern Irish coach Steve Morrow has brought in a 19-year-old Brazilian forward, Ricardinho, Colombian midfielder Juan Toja and Argentinian midfielder Pablo Ricchetti.

Chicago now have a Latino coach, Colombian Juan Carlos Osorio, and he has brought in the exciting, if unpredictable, Costa Rican Paulo Wanchope to play alongside Blanco.

But the most unexpected news came from Real Salt Lake. A change of coach – John Ellinger was replaced earlier in the season by Jason Kreis, who had only recently retired as a player – has brought a new signing policy. With his team languishing at the bottom of the standings (only two wins in 17 games), Kreis announced the introduction of three Argentinians – striker Edgar Espindola, midfielder Javier Morales and defender Matias Mantilla.

The impact of most of these players has been impressive. DC's Emilio quickly became the League's leading scorer, with 13 goals in 18 games, while Angel jumped into third position, with 10 in 13. Blanco and Barros Schelotto settled in as their team's most impressive performer. But perhaps the most successful player was Toja. The

Mexican Fire...Chicago's Cuauhtemoc Blanco is too hot for Columbus Crew's Stefano Miglioranzi

22-year-old had failed to break into the first team at River Plate, his previous club, but quickly became a fan favourite at his new club, with his skilful dribbling and goalscoring ability. He was selected for the MLS all-star team and scored in the 2-0 win over Celtic.

Another Hispanic happening that added interest and excitement to MLS was the highly successful SuperLiga, a tournament featuring four US teams and four Mexican teams. The games, all played in MLS stadiums, drew an average 16,700 fans, and undoubtedly achieved at least two of the aims desired by MLS: to attract more Mexican-American fans and to create a livelier, more passionate atmosphere at MLS games.

Most intriguing was the way that playing against Mexicans induced a change in style among the MLS teams. The closer, more confident ball control of the Mexicans forced the US teams into a more thoughtful, less physical approach.

The games were evenly balanced, and the success of the MLS teams – they took three of the semi-final places – can be put down to the fact that they were playing at home. The Final – Mexican champions Pachuca against LA Galaxy, complete with Beckham – was a dream game for the organisers.

The Hispanic influence has so far been frozen out in the far north. Up in Toronto and Boston, Scottish coaches rule – Mo Johnston at Toronto FC, in their inaugural season, and Steve Nichol at New England Revolution. Johnston has the Canada-born Miguel Canizales, who has started only two games; Nicol's squad includes young Mexican-American Miguel Gonzalez, who has yet to play.

Nicol, at least, has a successful team – the Revs have appeared in three of the last five championship finals, even though they have lost all three. But Toronto is a sad story. A desperately poor team playing in a stadium that is jam-packed for every game, creating the most vibrant atmosphere of any MLS stadium.

Certainly, the colourful Toronto fans need no help from Hispanics in creating a passionate atmosphere. But on the field, the unimaginative, pedestrian team could do with an injection of Latino skills and ball artistry.

Paul Gardner

CANADA

Sidelined Sutton hits out

NATIONAL TEAM goalkeeper Greg Sutton is expected to miss up to a year of action after returning to training too quickly following a concussion suffered in the opening round of the CONCACAF Gold Cup this summer.

Sutton, who plays his club football with Toronto FC, was misdiagnosed by a local Miami doctor following his team's 2-1 loss against Guadeloupe. And the keeper has now fired a few salvoes at the Canadian Soccer Association about the fact that the squad had not taken their own medical personnel to the tournament.

"We all understand it's not easy because of limited funds, but that's an excuse that's starting to wear out," Sutton said. "It's not just me. There were a lot of injuries during that trip that needed to be assessed properly, and we didn't have that. That's something that needs to be fixed." CSA president Colin Linford said that the issue would be discussed at the next executive committee meeting.

The CSA has confirmed it will not be launching a Canada Cup tournament until 2009 since CONCACAF has refused to allow the winner of a projected earlier edition into its 2008 Champions Cup tournament. "Only first division sides can play in the CONCACAF Champions Cup," said confederation spokesperson Steve Torres. Canada does not have a professional league of its own. An announcement about the possible expansion of the Champions Cup to admit up to two Canadian clubs is expected by the end of the year.

Philippe Germain

Net loss...Canada keeper Greg Sutton was angered by the lack of medical personnel

Club class...Pekerman

MEXICO

Pekerman joins the club

JOSE PEKERMAN, Argentina's coach at the last World Cup, has taken charge at Toluca. It is the first time the 57-year-old, who made his name by steering Argentina to three Under-20 World Cups, has coached a club side.

Pekerman replaces compatriot Americo Gallego, who had been widely expected to take a break but, instead, was lured by an offer from Monterrey-based Tigres.

The latter have not won anything for 25 years and must have been impressed by Gallego's record – he has won domestic titles with every team he has coached: Newell's Old Boys, Independiente and River Plate in his homeland, as well as Toluca.

Another Argentinian, Nery Pumpido, has taken charge at Veracruz, in succession to former Paraguay coach Anibal Ruiz. Pumpido, the 1986 World Cup-winning goalkeeper, steered Olimpia of Paraguay to the 2002 Libertadores Cup. The other big coaching change was at Cruz Azul, who have replaced Isaac Mizrahi with Uruguayan Sergio Markarian.

America have been among the big spenders in the transfer market, signing Argentinian pair Federico Insua (from Monchengladbach) and Lucas Castroman (Velez Sarsfield) as they attempt to make up for the departure of Cuauhtemoc Blanco to Chicago Fire. Monterrey snapped up Chile's prolific striker Humberto Suazo from Colo Colo, while Ecuadorean forward Cristian Benitez has joined Santos Laguna from El Nacional.

Brian Homewood

ASIAN CUP

Tough stuff for Socceroos

Up for it...Oman's Amad Al-Hosni gets the better of Brett Emerton as Australia are held to a draw

FOR AUSTRALIA, the group stage of their first Asian Cup, in which they faced Iraq, Oman and co-hosts Thailand, was supposed to be little more than a formality, with the real action to start in the knockout stages.

But if the Australians really did join the Asian Football Confederation for a more competitive environment than that offered by Oceania, then they would not have been disappointed. Tim Cahill salvaged a point for Graham Arnold's team in the opening game, against Oman, with an injury-time equaliser, but the Socceroos were then humbled 3-1 by Iraq, who went on to win Group A.

Rumours spread of a lack of unity within the Australian dressing room, and Arnold made wholesale changes for the must-win clash against Thailand, including leaving Harry Kewell on the bench. A flattering 4-0 win followed, three of the goals coming in the last 10 minutes. The Thais had been written off before the tournament, but impressed, as did two of their fellow co-hosts, Indonesia and Vietnam. Thailand's 2-0 win over Oman was their first at an Asian Cup finals.

Vietnam made it through Group B, finishing runners-up to defending champions Japan. Alfred Riedl's young team started well by downing the United Arab Emirates 2-0, and then gained a fortuitous 1-1 draw with Qatar. A 4-1 defeat to the Japanese proved academic as Qatar lost to the UAE, a result that cost coach Dzemaludin Musovic his job. Uruguayan Jorge Fossati is the new man in charge.

The Indonesians also got out of the blocks quickly in Group D, defeating Bahrain 2-1 in their opening match. They then lost 2-1 against eventual group winners Saudi Arabia, though only to a last-minute goal, and also went down, 1-0, to South Korea, who went through as runners-up.

Of the four co-hosts, only the Malaysians failed to make an impact, with Norizan Bakar's team hopelessly outclassed in Group C by Iran, China and Uzbekistan.

The Iranians struggled despite their array of individual talent, recording only a narrow 2-1 victory against the Uzbeks and then drawing 2-2 with the Chinese. But they topped the group by easing past Malaysia 2-0. Dynamo Kyiv striker Maksim Shatskikh proved the difference between his Uzbek side and China in the battle for second place, opening the scoring 18 minutes from time, with Timur Kapadze and Aleksander Geynrikh making it 3-0.

Uzbekistan were out of luck in their quarter-final against the Saudis. Rauf Iniliyev's side hit the woodwork five times and Shatskikh had a legitimate goal ruled out for offside as the Gulf side won 2-1.

Japan finally killed off Australia's challenge in their quarter-final, gaining revenge for their World Cup defeat by the Socceroos in Germany. Ivica Osim's side edged it on penalties after a 1-1 draw. John Aloisi had put Australia ahead in the 69th minute but Naohiro Takahara levelled three minutes later with his fourth goal of the tournament. Vince Grella was sent off three minutes after that but the Socceroos held on for extra-time and a shoot-out. Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi saved the spot-kicks of Kewell and Lucas Neill, who both had disappointing tournaments, and Yuji Nakazawa hammered home the winner.

South Korea also went through on penalties against Iran, keeper Lee Woon-jae being the hero of the day.

In Bangkok, Iraq eased past Vietnam, who looked lost without the backing of their home crowd in Hanoi. A goal in each half from Younis Mahmoud put the Iraqis into the last four for the first time since 1976.

Lee failed to reproduce his shoot-out magic in the semi-final in Kuala Lumpur after South Korea drew 0-0 with the Iraqis, who won 4-3 on penalties to reach their first Asian Cup Final. Korea boss Pim Verbeek duly stepped down.

The other semi was explosive and arguably the best game of the tournament. The Saudis took the lead through Yasser Al-Qahtani, only for Nakazawa to level two minutes later. Malek Mouath restored the Saudis' lead just after half-time but again the Japanese equalised, through Yuki Abe. Mouath struck again just before the hour, and although Naotake Hanyu hit a post late on, Japan's reign was over.

However, Saudi Arabia's high hopes of becoming the first nation to win the Asian Cup for a fourth time were dashed as, against all the odds, Iraq went home as continental champions.

Michael Church

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● Abahani KC won the inaugural B-League title in BANGLADESH to end a six-year trophy drought. Their arch-rivals Mohammedan SC were runners-up.

● FA Cup holders Kedah made it a Double by winning the Super League in MALAYSIA with a 1-0 defeat of Brunei DPMM.

● In VIETNAM, Binh Duong are well on course for their first league title, continuing their impressive run with a 2-0 win over former champions Song Lam Nghe An.

● Adelaide United beat Perth Glory 2-1 in the Final of AUSTRALIA'S A-League Pre-Season Cup to win the trophy for the second year running. New Brazilian signing Casio stole the show, setting up Bruce Djite for the equaliser after Leo Bertos had put Glory ahead and then hitting the winner himself, with a sublime 25-metre curling shot seven minutes from the end.

Azam Mahmood & Paul Moon

OCEANIA

● In a rare friendly international for both teams, SOLOMON ISLANDS defeated PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2-1 at home in Honiara. The hosts dominated the early stages and Abraham Iniga headed them in front from a George Lui cross. PNG replied immediately through Reginald Davani's free-kick, but David Aua's failure to hold a Godwin Bebeu shot in the second half allowed Alick Maemae to tap home the winner from close range.

The Solomons were using the game as preparation for the World Cup qualifying encounters at the end of August and early September. The PNG federation opted not to enter the tournament.

● Central United will meet holders Western Suburbs in the Final of NEW ZEALAND'S Chatham Cup, the country's top knockout tournament, after both won their semi-final 3-1, against North Shore United and Caversham respectively.

● Top FIJIAN side Ba are in the Oceania Champions League after winning the opening stage of the domestic championship.

Paul Moon

On the mark...Yuichiro Nagai hit Reds' winner against Gamba

JAPAN

Reds rein in Gamba

REIGNING CHAMPIONS Urawa Reds stopped Gamba Osaka from breaking away at the top of the J.League with a stunning 1-0 win away. The result narrowed the gap to just a point and ended Gamba's unbeaten home run in the league of 26 games.

Former Gamba keeper Ryota Tsuzuki was in heroic form for Reds, making a string of fine saves, and Yuichiro Nagai hit the winner in the 62nd minute. Reds have also been buoyed by the return from injury of striker Tatsuya Tanaka and central defender Tulio.

Mitsuo Ogasawara made an immediate impact on his return to Kashima Antlers from Messina, helping the team rise to third, notably by scoring twice in a 3-1 win over JEF United.

Bulgarian defender Ilian Stoyanov, who left JEF because of disagreements with coach Amar Osim, has joined struggling Sanfrecce Hiroshima.

Satoru Sakuma has taken over from Robert Verbeek as coach of Omiya Ardija.

Japan's Anti-Doping Agency has said the J.League made an error when imposing a six-match ban on Kawasaki Frontale striker Kazuki Ganaha and a £43,500 fine on the club in May because they had given the player an intravenous injection of a nutritional supplement. The JADA said that there had been no violation of the World Anti-Doping Agency's code.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ahly's double blow

HOLDERS AL AHLY won their first three Champions League group games and looked as if they would stroll into the semi-finals. But two consecutive defeats, against Esperance of Tunisia and Al Hilal of Sudan, meant they needed a draw in their final tie, at home to Ivorians ASEC Abidjan, to make sure.

Al Hilal, who have never reached the group stage before, went top of Group B on goal difference by thrashing Al Ahly 3-0 with goals from Dario Khan, Hassan Isaac Korongo and Ndubuisi Eze. It was the Egyptians' heaviest defeat in Africa's top club competition for 30 years.

Esperance are already out despite their 1-0 defeat of Al Ahly. They were on to their third coach of the campaign and had also had a change of president.

It was a much brighter story for fellow Tunisians Etoile Sahel, who made sure of winning Group A with a 0-0 draw at home to Morocco's FAR Rabat.

Algeria's JS Kabylie also moved on to their third coach of the group stage, when former Tottenham and Valencia midfielder Moussa Saib replaced Kamel Mouassa. But the team were still in contention for a semi-final berth.

Al Ittihad of Libya were favourites to take the runners-up spot, despite their troubles in the July defeat at FAR Rabat. Defender Mohamed Zubya was banned for a year for punching a linesman, and Serb coach Branko Smiljanic was handed a one-match ban for invading the pitch to dispute a disallowed goal.

Mark Gleeson

Holders held up...Al Ahly (in red) were beaten 3-0 by Al Hilal

ROUND-UP

● In EGYPT, former France coach Henri Michel quit Zamalek after the club refused to sell popular captain Hazem Imam, who had wanted to leave and who had been in poor form in recent years. Former Dutch international Ruud Krol has replaced Michel, taking charge for the second time. Ismaili fired another Frenchman, Patrice Neveu, after he failed to return as planned after a knee operation before the start of the African Confederation Cup group stage. Champions Al Ahly beat Ismaili 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the Super Cup.

● Former French international Francois Bracci has been appointed coach of MOROCCAN champions Olympique Khouribga. Portuguese Nelo Vingada quit after less than two months at Wydad Casablanca.

Walk out like an Egyptian...Michel

● The ETHIOPIAN championship ended in disarray as 10 of the 16 clubs boycotted the last five rounds in a row about the running of the sport. Provincial club Awasa Kenema, one of those to continue playing, were duly declared champions.

● APR FC won the Amahoro Cup in RWANDA with a 2-0 win over ATRACO.

● ANGOLA, three-times winners of the COSAFA Castle Cup, were eliminated from this year's edition by Botswana in the Final of qualifying Group C. Botswana join Mozambique, South Africa and defending champions Zambia in the semi-finals.

● Two SOUTH AFRICAN internationals have moved to Europe – Siyabonga Nkosi (Kaizer Chiefs to Arminia Bielefeld in Germany) and Benedict Vilakazi (Orlando Pirates to AaB Aalborg in Denmark).

● CF Ouagadougou won the BURKINA FASO championship for the first time, by a point from Etoile Filante.

● Dolphin beat Enugu Rangers 3-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the NIGERIAN FA Cup Final.

Mark Gleeson

ZIMBABWE

Inflationary fears

THE COUNTRY'S leading clubs are facing bankruptcy after the government introduced a ticket price freeze as part of its measures to try to combat Zimbabwe's rampant inflation, running at at least 10,000 per cent.

Premier League outfits such as Dynamos, CAPS United and Highlanders are desperately seeking special dispensation to increase their gate fees, which the government ordered to be pegged at 50,000 Zimbabwean dollars (worth around 25 US cents at the dominant black market rate) for the cheapest tickets. CAPS United attempted to price their cheapest tickets at Z$100,000 for a recent derby match against Dynamos at Harare's Rufaro stadium but were thwarted when the police sent inspectors to monitor sales.

The clubs are also losing substantial sums of money as they honour their league fixtures, some spending up to the ridiculous-sounding sum of Z$500million per away game in accommodation and travel costs.

The clubs have the support of the FA but feel they should be receiving more help from the Premier Soccer League management.

Henrietta Rushwaya, the FA's acting chief executive, has written to the chairman of the task force on price monitoring and stabilisation, Obert Mpofu, asking for football to be given a special waiver to effect an increase in the prices of tickets, especially at high-profile games. "We can't just sit in the boardrooms and offices and watch our clubs die, because these clubs provide a big service to our nation," she said.

Premier League chairman Tapiwa Matangaidze said his organisation will try to be more supportive of clubs.

Mark Gleeson

Stil the best...the team (celebrating, inset) regained the Sami Cup with a 7-0 win over Guovdageainnu

Arctic role

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION of the Sami, the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia, is aiming to set up a game with the Faroe Islands' national team this season as it looks to build on its success at last November's Viva World Cup for non-FIFA-affiliated "nations".

The representative side of the Sami, more commonly known as Lapps, have not played since winning the Final of that event, when they beat an amateur Monaco representative side 21-1. They were offered the chance to play Greenland in Copenhagen in September but turned it down.

FA president Leif Isak Nilut said: "After Occitania [the area of southern France where the Viva event was staged], we need to play the strongest teams possible.

"I have been to Torshavn [the Faroe Islands' capital] and met the FA. We have good relations, and our aim for this season will be a game with their national team, but these things take time."

Before then, the Sami will be involved in the Nilut Cup, an annual five-a-side competition which this year is being held in Kautokeino in northern Norway in November. This tournament will help the FA pick a representative five-a-side team for next year's Arctic Winter Games at Yellowknife in Canada.

The Sami's main 11-a-side tournament, the Sami Cup, was staged between July 6 and 8 in Karasjok, home to the Norwegian Sami parliament. Around 40,000 of the 70,000 Sami live in Norway, 20,000 in Sweden and 5,000 each in Finland and on the Kola peninsula in Russia. The Swedish and Finnish Sami also have their own parliaments and have semi-autonomous powers over traditional activities such as reindeer herding.

Representative sides

The men's event in Karasjok featured 15 sides representing local Sami associations, such as Storlule Sameforening (which included FA vice-president Hakan Kuorak in defence), reindeer-herding organisations or family groupings.

The Karasjok Reindeer Herders Association fell in the semi-finals to Guovdageainnu Luntta II, who were then outclassed by Stil in the Final, losing 7-0. Stil benefited from the fact that their team included many players from the local league side Bossekop, who had gone into the mid-summer break on top of their division in Norway's regional third tier.

Stil, who also won the Sami Cup on their debut in 2005, took a spectacular early lead when Karstin Pettersen lobbed the Guovdageainnu goalkeeper from his own half. Captain Morten Jagervand bagged a second, and Guovdageainnu then had a player sent off just before half-time.

After the break Jagervand, the game's outstanding player, put Stil 3-0 up with a brilliant strike, followed by goals from Ermin Bectesevic and Oyvind Veseth Olsen.

Guovdageainnu were reduced to nine men when their keeper was sent off for bringing down a Stil player who was through on goal. Lasse Person converted the penalty, and his brother, Per Erland Person, scored the final goal, also from the spot, right at the end of the game.

Steve Menary

RESULTS SEPTEMBER 2007

INTERNATIONALS

ASIAN CUP

In Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand & Vietnam

Group A

July 7 - Bangkok
Thailand 1 (Sutee pen 6)
Iraq 1 (Younis 32)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Kwon (SKo)
Thailand: Kosin - Suree, Jetsada, Niweat, Nataporn, Datsakorn, Therdsak (Suchao 72), Tawan, Nirut, Kiatisuk (Teeratep 72), Sutee (Teerasil 86).
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem, Nashat (Karrar 90), Salih (Qusay 66), Younis, Hawar, Haider, Ali Rehema, Mahdi, Haitham.

July 8 - Bangkok
Australia 1 (Cahill 90)
Oman 1 (Al-Maimani 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Maillet (Sey)
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Kisnorbo (Holman 78), Culina, Emerton, Wilkshire, Grella (Cahill 62), Sterjovski (Aloisi 46), Bresciano, Viduka, Kewell.
Oman: Al-Habsi - Al-Noobi, Al-Wahaibi, Suwailim, Al-Busaidi (Al-Ghassani 65), Al-Gheilani, Al-Mahaijri, Al-Mukhaini, Al-Maimani (Bait Doorbeen 60), Al-Ajmi, Al-Hosni (Al-Mahyijari 80).

July 12 - Bangkok
Oman 0
Thailand 2 (Pipat 70, 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Lee (SKo)
Oman: Al-Habsi - Al-Noobi, Al-Wahaibi, Suwailim, Al-Gheilani, Bait Doorbeen, Al-Mahaijri, Al-Mukhaini, Al-Maimani (Al-Mushaifri 78), Al-Ajmi, Al-Hosni.
Thailand: Kosin - Suree, Niweat, Nataporn, Nirut, Kiatprawut, Datsakorn, Therdsak (Pipat 58), Tawan, Kiatisuk (Teeratep 67), Sutee (Suchao 73).

July 13 - Bangkok
Iraq 3 (Nashat 22, Hawar 60, Karrar 86)
Australia 1 (Viduka 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,884. **Ref:** Karim (Bah)
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem, Haider, Ali Rehema, Nashat, Salih (Qusay 49), Hawar, Mahdi, Haitham (Karrar 74), Younis (Mohammad Shakrown 90).
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Kisnorbo (Aloisi 71), Emerton, Culina (Thompson 64), Wilkshire, Grella, Bresciano, Viduka, Kewell, Holman (Cahill 46).
Sent off: Neill 90min.

July 16 - Bangkok
Oman 0
Iraq 0
Att: 500. **Ref:** Maillet (Sey)
Oman: Al-Habsi - Al-Noobi, Al-Sinani, Al-Busaidi, Al-Gheilani, Bait Doorbeen (Al-Hadhri 69), Al-Mahaijri, Al-Mukhaini (Al-Mahyijari 81), Al-Maimani, Al-Ajmi (Al-Mushaifri 67), Al-Hosni.
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem, Khaldoun, Ali Rehema, Nashat, Ahmed Mohammed (Ali Mshehid 71), Hawar (Karrar 45), Mahdi, Qusay, Younis.

July 16 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Australia 4 (Beauchamp 20, Viduka 80, 83, Kewell 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 46,000. **Ref:** Kwon (SKo)
Thailand: Kosin - Suree, Niweat, Nataporn, Nirut, Kiatprawut (Jetsada 56), Tawan, Suchao, Kiatisuk, Teeratep (Pipat 60), Sutee (Datsakorn 54).
Australia: Schwarzer - Beauchamp, Emerton, Milligan, Culina, Wilkshire, Grella, Carney, Bresciano (Cahill 74), Viduka (Holman 84), Aloisi (Kewell 61).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iraq	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Australia	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Thailand	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Oman	3	0	2	1	1	3	2

Group B

July 8 - Hanoi
Vietnam 2 (Huynh Quang Thanh 63, Le Cong Vinh 73)
United Arab Emirates 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,450. **Ref:** Najm (Leb)
Vietnam: Duong Hong Son - Phung Van Nhien, Nguyen Huy Hoang, Vu Nhu Thanh, Huynh Quang Thanh, Nguyen Minh Phuong (Nguyen Minh Chuyen 77), Le Tan Tai, Nguyen Vu Phong, Phan Van Tai Em, Le Cong Vinh (Huynh Phuc Hiep 90), Phan Thanh Binh (Nguyen Anh Duc 84).
United Arab Emirates: Maqdemi - Al-Hosani, Mohamed, B Al-Hammadi, Y Al-Hammadi, Al-Jenaibi, Al-Mahri (Albalooshi 70), Al-Saedi (A Al-Hammadi 80), I Al-Junaibi, F Al-Junaibi, Al-Shehhi.

July 9 - Hanoi
Japan 1 (Takahara 60)
Qatar 1 (Quintana 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Breeze (Aus)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Kaji, Nakazawa, Konno, Abe, Endo, Yamagishi (Hanyu 74), S Nakamura, Suzuki, K Nakamura (Hashimoto 81), Takahara.
Qatar: Ahmed - Al-Hamad (Siddiq 46), Budawood, Al-Shammari, M Abdulla, Koni, Al-Bloushi, Abdulmajid (Hassan 75), Abdulrahman, W Abdulla (Mohd 66), Quintana. *Sent off: Abdulrahman 90min.*

July 12 - Hanoi
Qatar 1 (Quintana 79)
Vietnam 1 (Phan Thanh Binh 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Qatar: Ahmed - Budawood, Al-Shammari, M Abdulla, Koni, Al-Bloushi, Abdulmajid, Hassan (Siddiq 78), W Abdulla (Bechir 58), Mohd (Yahya 73), Quintana.
Vietnam: Duong Hong Son - Phung Van Nhien, Nguyen Huy Hoang, Vu Nhu Thanh (Pham Hung Dung 55), Huynh Quang Thanh, Nguyen Minh Phuong, Le Tan Tai, Nguyen Vu Phong, Phan Van Tai Em (Nguyen Minh Chuyen 82), Le Cong Vinh, Phan Thanh Binh (Nguyen Anh Duc 90).

July 13 - Hanoi
United Arab Emirates 1 (Alkas 66)
Japan 3 (Takahara 22, 27, S Nakamura pen 42)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Tongkhan (Tha)
United Arab Emirates: Maqdemi - Al-Hosani, Mohamed, B Al-Hammadi, Majeed, Al-Jenaibi, Hussain (Alkas 46), Al-Saedi, Albalooshi (Al-Mahri 46), I Al-Junaibi, Al-Shehhi (Al-Balooshi 56). *Sent off: B Al-Hammadi 53.*
Japan: Kawaguchi - Komano, Kaji, Nakazawa, Abe, Endo, S Nakamura (Mizuno 71), Suzuki (Konno 77), K Nakamura, Maki, Takahara (Hanyu 66).

July 16 - Hanoi
Vietnam 1 (Suzuki og 7)
Japan 4 (Maki 12, 59, Endo 31, S Nakamura 52)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Breeze (Aus)
Vietnam: Duong Hong Son - Phung Van Nhien, Nguyen Huy Hoang, Vu Nhu Thanh, Huynh Quang Thanh, Nguyen Minh Phuong (Phan Thanh Binh 80), Le Tan Tai (Doan Viet Cuong 74), Nguyen Minh Chuyen, Nguyen Vu Phong, Phan Van Tai Em (Phung Cong Minh 65), Le Cong Vinh.
Japan: Kawaguchi - Komano, Kaji, Nakazawa, Abe, Endo (Mizuno 68), S Nakamura (Hanyu 61), Suzuki, K Nakamura, Maki (Sato 68), Takahara.

July 16 - Ho Chi Minh City
Qatar 1 (Quintana 42)
United Arab Emirates 2 (Alkas 59, F Al-Junaibi 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Qatar: Ahmed - Rajab, Budawood, M Abdulla (Al-Hamad 72), Koni, Siddiq, Al-Bloushi, Abdulmajid (Mohd 79), Abdulrahman, Yahya (Hassan 69), Quintana.
United Arab Emirates: Al-Badrani - Al-Hosani, Y Al-Hammadi, Al-Balooshi, Al-Jenaibi, Al-Dhaheri, Al-Mahri, A Al-Hammadi (Al-Saedi 90), Al-Darmaki (Al-Shehhi 81), I Al-Junaibi, Alkas (F Al-Junaibi 78).

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	3	2	1	0	8	3	7
Vietnam	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
UAE	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
Qatar	3	0	2	1	3	4	2

Group C

July 10 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 1 (Indra Putra 73)
China 5 (Han Peng 15, 55, Shao Jiayi 36, Wang Dong 51, 90)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)
Malaysia: Azizon - Fauzie, Kaironnisam, Rosdi, Zamani, Hardi, Shukor, Shahrul (Eddy 46), Fadzli (Nantha 58), Akmal (Indra Putra 62), Hairuddin.
China: Li Lei - Sun Xiang, Zhang Yaokun, Li Weifeng, Zheng Zhi, Shao Jiayi (Li Tie 67), Sun Jihai, Wang Dong, Zhou Haibin, Han Peng (Dong Fangzhuo 72), Mao Jianqing (Zheng Bin 88).

July 11 - Kuala Lumpur
Iran 2 (Hosseini 55, Kazemian 78)
Uzbekistan 1 (Rezaei og 16)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,863. **Ref:** Al-Fadhli (Kuw)
Iran: Roudbarian - Rezaei, Hosseini, Mahdavikia, Timotian, Nekounam, Zandi, Karimi (Aghily 90), Hashemian (Mandanchi 73), Khatibi (Kazemian 46), Enayati.
Uzbekistan: Bugalo - Karimov, Ibragimov, Nikolaev, Denisov, Haydarov (Khoshimov 61), Djeparov, Kapadze, Inomov, Solomin (Bikmaev 64), Bakaev (Geynrikh 81).

July 14 - Kuala Lumpur
Uzbekistan 5 (Shatskikh 10, 89, Kapadze 30, Bakaev 45, Ibragimov 85)
Malaysia 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 7,137. **Ref:** Abdou (Qat)
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Karimov, Ismailov (Ibragimov 50), Nikolaev, Denisov (Solomin 68), Djeparov, Kapadze, Inomov, Karpenko, Bakaev (Geynrikh 63), Shatskikh.
Malaysia: Azizon - Thiru, Kaironnisam, Nantha, Rosdi, Hardi (Fadzli 83), Shukor, Shahrul, Ivan (Norfarhan 55), Indra Putra, Hairuddin (Akmal 71).

July 15 - Kuala Lumpur
China 2 (Shao Jiayi 6, Mao Jianqing 33)
Iran 2 (Zandi 45, Nekounam 73)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 5,938. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)
China: Li Lei - Sun Xiang, Zhang Yaokun, Li Weifeng, Zheng Zhi, Shao Jiayi, Sun Jihai, Wang Dong (Zhao Xuri 61), Zhou Haibin, Han Peng (Du Wei 79), Mao Jianqing (Zhu Ting 68).
Iran: Roudbarian - Rezaei, Hosseini, Kaebi (Mobali 46), Mahdavikia, Timotian, Nekounam, Zandi (Madanchi 89), Karimi (Kazemian 46), Hashemian, Enayati.

July 18 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 0
Iran 2 (Nekounam pen 29, Timotian 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,520. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)
Malaysia: Azizon - Hamzani (Fauzie 73), Thiru, Kaironnisam, Nantha, Rosdi, Aidil, Shukor, Shahrul (Norfarhan 68), Indra Putra, Safee (Hardi 53).
Iran: Roudbarian - Rezaei, Hosseini, Mahdavikia, Timotian, Nekounam, Zandi, Karimi, Mobali (Kazemian 52), Hashemian (Rajabzadeh 79), Enayati (Khatibi 46).

July 18 - Kuala Lumpur
Uzbekistan 3 (Shatskikh 72, Kapadze 86, Geynrikh 90)
China 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,200. **Ref:** Al-Fadhli (Kuw)
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Karimov, Ibragimov (Solomin 90), Nikolaev, Denisov (Karpenko 63), Gafurov, Haydarov, Djeparov, Kapadze, Bakaev (Geynrikh 46), Shatskikh.
China: Yang Jun - Du Wei, Sun Xiang, Zhang Yaokun, Zhang Shuai (Zhu Ting 78), Shao Jiayi, Sun Jihai, Zhou Haibin, Han Peng, Dong Fangzhuo (Zhao Xuri 70), Mao Jianqing (Wang Dong 41).

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Uzbekistan	3	2	0	1	9	2	6
China	3	1	1	1	7	6	4
Malaysia	3	0	0	3	1	12	0

Group D

July 10 - Jakarta
Indonesia 2 (Budi 14, Bambang 64)
Bahrain 1 (Al-Wadaei 27)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Indonesia: Yandri - Ridwan, Richardo, Maman, Charis, Mahyadi (Eka 31), Elie (Supardi 85), Ponaryo (Syamsul 34), Firman, Budi, Bambang.
Bahrain: Ahmed - Marzooq, Mohamed, Al-Wadaei, Al-Doseri (Fatadi 83), Omar (Mahmood 66), Aaish, Abdul Rahman, M Hubail (Abdulla 80), Okwunwanne, A Hubail.

July 11 - Jakarta
South Korea 1 (Choi Sung-kuk 65)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Y Al-Qahtani pen 77)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Shield (Aus)
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Sang-sik, Kim Chi-woo, Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Kim Jung-woo, Son Dae-ho, Choi Sung-kuk (Lee Chun-soo 66), Cho Jae-jin (Lee Dong-gook 81), Yeom Ki-hun.
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri, Jahdali, Khariri, Al-Thaker, A Al-Qahtani (Autef 56), Y Al-Qahtani (Al-Harthi 80), A Al-Mousa, Mouath.

July 14 - Jakarta
Saudi Arabia 2 (Y Al-Qahtani 12, Al-Harthi 89)
Indonesia 1 (Elie 17)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 87,000. **Ref:** Al-Badwawi (UAE)
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri, Jahdali, Khariri (Al-Jassam 66), Al-Thaker, A Al-Qahtani, Y Al-Qahtani (Al-Harthi 89), A Al-Mousa (Autef 56), Mouath.
Indonesia: Yandri - Ridwan, Richardo, Maman, Charis, Eka, Elie (Supardi 80), Firman (Atep 84), Syamsul, Budi (Ismed 89), Bambang.

July 15 - Jakarta
Bahrain 2 (Ali 43, I Hasan 85)
South Korea 1 (Kim Do-heon 4)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Sun (Chn)
Bahrain: Ahmed - M Hasan, Marzooq, Ali (Abdul Rahman 78), Husain, Al-Wadaei, Al-Doseri, Aaish, M Hubail, I Hasan (Salmeen 87), A Hubail.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Song Chong-gug, Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Dong-jin, Kim Sang-sik, Kang Min-soo, Lee Ho (Kim Jung-woo 68), Kim Do-heon, Lee Chun-soo, Lee Dong-gook (Cho Jae-jin 66), Yeom Ki-hun.

July 18 - Jakarta
Indonesia 0
South Korea 1 (Kim Jung-woo 34)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 87,000. **Ref:** Shield (Aus)
Indonesia: Markus - Ridwan, Richardo, Maman, Charis, Elie, Ponaryo (Erol 76), Firman, Syamsul, Budi, Bambang.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Kim Jin-kyu (Lee Dong-gook 88), Kim Sang-sik, Kim Chi-woo, Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Kim Jung-woo, Son Dae-ho (Oh Jang-eun 89), Choi Sung-kuk, Cho Jae-jin, Lee Chun-soo.

July 18 - Palembang
Saudi Arabia 4 (A Al-Mousa 18, A Al-Qahtani 45, Al-Jassam 68, 80)
Bahrain 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri, Jahdali, Khariri, A Al-Qahtani (Autef 56), Y Al-Qahtani (Al-Harthi 77), A Al-Mousa (Al-Ghamdi 71), Mouath, Al-Jassam.
Bahrain: Ahmed - M Hasan, Marzooq, Ali, Husain, Al-Wadaei (Habib 81), Al-Doseri, Mahmood (Fatadi 73), Aaish, I Hasan, A Hubail (Okwunwanne 67).

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	3	2	1	0	7	2	7
South Korea	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Indonesia	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Bahrain	3	1	0	2	3	7	3

Top two in each group qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

July 21 - Hanoi
Japan 1 (Takahara 72)
Australia 1 (Aloisi 69)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 25,000.
Ref: Al-Fadhli (Kuw)
Japan 4-3 on pens
Japan: Kawaguchi - Komano, Kaji (Konno 88), Nakazawa, Abe, Endo, S Nakamura, Suzuki, K Nakamura (Yano 115), Maki (Sato 102), Takahara.
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Beauchamp, Emerton, Milligan, Culina, Grella, Carney, Bresciano (Cahill 71), Viduka (Kewell 61), Aloisi (Carle 82).
Sent off: Grella 75min.

July 21 - Bangkok
Iraq 2 (Younis 2, 65)
Vietnam 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,720. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem, Haider (Khaldoun 84), Ali Rehema, Nashat, Hawar, Karrar (Mohammad Shakrown 66), Mahdi, Haitham (Ahmed Mohammed 32), Younis.
Vietnam: Duong Hong Son - Nguyen Huy Hoang (Pham Hung Dung 83), Vu Nhu Thanh, Huynh Quang Thanh, Chau Phong Hoa, Phung Cong Minh (Nguyen Minh Chuyen 46), Nguyen Minh Phuong, Le Tan Tai, Nguyen Vu Phong, Le Cong Vinh, Nguyen Anh Duc (Phan Thanh Binh 70).

July 22 - Kuala Lumpur
Iran 0
South Korea 0
Aet. **Att:** 8,629. **Ref:** Al-Badwawi (UAE)
South Korea 4-2 on pens
Iran: Roudbarian (Taleblou 120) - Rezaei, Hosseini, Nosrati, Mahdavikia, Timotian, Nekounam, Karimi, Madanchi (Zandi 62), Hashemian (Enayati 87), Khatibi.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Sang-sik, Kim Chi-woo, Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Kim Jung-woo, Son Dae-ho (Kim Do-heon 106), Lee Chun-soo, Lee Dong-gook (Cho Jae-jin 46), Yeom Ki-hun (Choi Sung-kuk 78).

July 22 - Jakarta
Saudi Arabia 2 (Y Al-Qahtani 2, A Al-Mousa 75)
Uzbekistan 1 (Solomin 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Kwon (SKo)
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri, Jahdali, Khariri (Al-Ghamdi 89), Al-Thaker, A Al-Qahtani (A Al-Mousa 63), Y Al-Qahtani (Al-Harthi 90), Mouath, Al-Jassam.
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Karimov, Ibragimov, Nikolaev, Denisov, Gafurov (Geynrikh 46), Haydarov (Solomin 78), Djeparov, Kapadze (Karpenko 57), Inomov, Shatskikh.

Semi-finals

July 25 - Kuala Lumpur
Iraq 0
South Korea 0
Aet. **Att:** 12,500. **Ref:** Al-Fadhli (Kuw)
Iraq 4-3 on pens
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem, Haider, Ali Rehema, Nashat, Hawar, Karrar (Ahmed Abbas 108), Mahdi, Qusay, Younis.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Sang-sik (Kim Jung-woo 58), Kim Chi-woo, Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Son Dae-ho (Oh Jang-eun 106), Choi Sung-kuk (Lee Dong-gook 87), Cho Jae-jin, Lee Chun-soo, Yeom Ki-hun.

July 25 - Hanoi
Japan 2 (Nakazawa 37, Abe 53)
Saudi Arabia 3 (Y Al-Qahtani 35, Mouath 47, 57)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Breeze (Aus)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Komano, Kaji, Nakazawa, Abe, Endo (Hanyu 75), S Nakamura, Suzuki, K Nakamura (Yano 87), Maki (Sato 68), Takahara.
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri, Jahdali (Fallatah 77), Khariri (Al-Ghamdi 86), Al-Thaker, A Al-Qahtani (A Al-Mousa 60), Y Al-Qahtani, Mouath, Al-Jassam.

Third-place play-off

July 28 - Palembang
South Korea 0
Japan 0
Aet. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Al-Badwawi (UAE)
South Korea 6-5 on pens
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Chi-woo, Oh Beom-seok, Kang Min-soo, Kim Do-heon (Kim Chi-gon 65), Kim Jung-woo, Oh Jang-eun (Lee Ho 86), Cho Jae-jin, Lee Chun-soo, Yeom Ki-hun (Lee Keun-ho 39). *Sent off: Kang Min-soo 56min.*
Japan: Kawaguchi - Komano, Kaji, Nakazawa, Abe, Endo, Yamagishi (Sato 78), S Nakamura, Suzuki, K Nakamura (Hanyu 72), Takahara.

Final

July 29 - Jakarta
Iraq 1 (Younis 73)
Saudi Arabia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Shield (Aus)
Iraq: Noor - Jassim, Basem (Ali Mshehid 89), Haider, Ali Rehema, Nashat, Hawar, Karrar (Ahmed Abbas 83), Mahdi (Ahmed Mohammed 90), Qusay, Younis.
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - Hawsawi, K Al-Mousa, Al-Bahri (Al-Harthi 84), Jahdali, Khariri, Al-Thaker, A Al-Qahtani (A Al-Mousa 46), Y Al-Qahtani, Mouath, Al-Jassam (Autef 76).

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Aug 22 - Yerevan
Armenia 1 (Arzumanyan 11)
Portugal 1 (Cristiano Ronaldo 37)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Armenia: Berezovsky - Hovsepyan, Arzumanyan, Tadevosyan, Mkrtchyan, Pachajyan, Voskanyan, Arakelyan, Artavazd Karamyan (Melikyan 70), Mkhitaryan (Ghazaryan 59), Melkonyan (Hachatryan 90).
Portugal: Ricardo - Miguel, Fernando Meira, Jorge Andrade (Bruno Alves 76), Paulo Ferreira, Raul Meireles, Tiago, Deco, Cristiano Ronaldo, Helder Postiga (Nuno Gomes 61), Simao (Quaresma 63).

Aug 22 - Brussels
Belgium 3 (Dembele 10, 88, Mirallas 30)
Serbia 2 (Kuzmanovic 73, 90)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Belgium: Stijnen - Simons, Hoefkens, Vermaelen, Kompany, Mudingayi, Goor, Geraerts, Mirallas (Vanden Borre 67), Dembele (Lombaerts 90), Defour (M Mpenza 86).
Serbia: Stojkovic - Rukavina, Vidic, Krstajic, Dragutinovic, N Kovacevic, Kuzmanovic, Jankovic, Koroman (Krasic 56), Lazovic (Smiljanic 70), Pantelic (Jovanovic 56).

Aug 22 - Tampere
Finland 2 (A Eremenko 13, Tainio 61)
Kazakhstan 1 (Byakov 23)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Kallio, Hyypia, Tihinen, Pasanen, R Eremenko (Sjolund 46), Heikkinen, Kolkka (Nurmela 88), Tainio (Riihilahti 76), A Eremenko, Johansson.
Kazakhstan: Loria - Azovskiy, Kuchma, Smakov, Irismetov, Skorykh (Chichulin 69), Larin (Ashirbekov 78), Baltiev, Zhumaskaliyev, Byakov, Ostapenko (Suyumagambetov 70).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	9	6	1	2	15	7	19
Finland	9	5	2	2	11	6	17
Portugal	8	4	3	1	16	6	15
Serbia	8	4	2	2	12	7	14
Belgium	9	3	1	5	8	12	10
Armenia	8	2	2	4	4	8	8
Kazakhstan	9	1	3	5	6	13	6
Azerbaijan	8	1	2	5	4	17	5

Remaining games
08.09.07 Azerbaijan-Armenia
08.09.07 Portugal-Poland
08.09.07 Serbia-Finland
12.09.07 Armenia-Azerbaijan
12.09.07 Finland-Poland
12.09.07 Kazakhstan-Belgium
12.09.07 Portugal-Serbia
13.10.07 Armenia-Serbia
13.10.07 Azerbaijan-Portugal
13.10.07 Belgium-Finland
13.10.07 Poland-Kazakhstan
17.10.07 Azerbaijan-Serbia
17.10.07 Belgium-Armenia
17.10.07 Kazakhstan-Portugal
17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	7	6	0	1	15	2	18
Italy	7	5	1	1	13	6	16
Scotland	7	5	0	2	13	6	15
Ukraine	6	4	0	2	8	6	12
Lithuania	7	2	1	4	4	7	7
Georgia	8	2	0	6	13	14	6
Faroe Islands	8	0	0	8	2	27	0

Remaining games
08.09.07 Georgia-Ukraine
08.09.07 Italy-France
08.09.07 Scotland-Lithuania
12.09.07 France-Scotland
12.09.07 Lithuania-Faroe Islands
12.09.07 Ukraine-Italy
13.10.07 Faroe Islands-France
13.10.07 Italy-Georgia
13.10.07 Scotland-Ukraine
17.10.07 France-Lithuania
17.10.07 Georgia-Scotland
17.10.07 Ukraine-Faroe Islands
17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	7	6	0	1	12	5	18
Bosnia-Herz	7	4	1	2	14	14	13
Turkey	6	4	1	1	16	6	13
Norway	7	4	1	2	17	6	13
Hungary	7	2	0	5	7	14	6
Malta	7	1	1	5	5	15	4
Moldova	7	0	2	5	4	15	2

Remaining games
08.09.07 Hungary-Bosnia-Herz
08.09.07 Malta-Turkey
08.09.07 Moldova-Norway
12.09.07 Bosnia-Herz-Moldova
12.09.07 Norway-Greece
12.09.07 Turkey-Hungary
13.10.07 Greece-Bosnia-Herz
13.10.07 Hungary-Malta
13.10.07 Moldova-Turkey
17.10.07 Bosnia-Herz-Norway
17.10.07 Malta-Moldova
17.10.07 Turkey-Greece
17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

Aug 22 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Cyprus 1 (Okkas 54)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Janku (Alb)
San Marino: A Simoncini - C Valentini, Vannucci, Albani, Della Valle, G Bollini (Ciacci 77), Bonini (Nanni 84), Bugli, F Bollini (Andreini 63), Manuel Marani, Selva.
Cyprus: Georgallides - Theodotou, Christou, Lambrou, Marangos (Nikolaou 24), Aloneftis, Michael, Garpozis (Charalambous 86), Yiasoumi (Charalambidis 55), Okkas, Constantinou.

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	7	6	1	0	29	4	19
Czech Rep	7	4	2	1	15	4	14
Rep Ireland	7	4	1	2	12	8	13
Slovakia	7	3	0	4	16	13	9
Wales	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Cyprus	7	2	1	4	10	16	7
San Marino	7	0	0	7	1	37	0

Remaining games
08.09.07 San Marino-Czech Republic
08.09.07 Slovakia-Rep Ireland
08.09.07 Wales-Germany
12.09.07 Cyprus-San Marino
12.09.07 Czech Republic-Rep Ireland
12.09.07 Slovakia-Wales
13.10.07 Cyprus-Wales
13.10.07 Rep Ireland-Germany
13.10.07 Slovakia-San Marino
17.10.07 Germany-Czech Republic
17.10.07 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
17.10.07 San Marino-Wales
17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

Aug 22 - Tallinn
Estonia 2 (Piiroja 34, Zelinski 90)
Andorra 1 (Silva 82)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** McCourt (NI)
Estonia: Poom - Jaager, Stepanov, Piiroja, Kruglov, Reim, Dmitrijev, Klavan, Lindpere, Zelinski, Voskoboinkov (Kink 46). *Sent off: Klavan 45min, Zelinski 90min.*
Andorra: Koldo - Txema, Sonejee, A Lima, I Lima, Escura, Ayala (G Garcia 90), Pujol (Sanchez 80), Sivera (Toscano 53), Vieira, Silva.

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	7	5	2	0	16	4	17
Israel	8	5	2	1	17	7	17
Russia	7	4	3	0	11	1	15
England	7	4	2	1	12	2	14
Macedonia	7	2	1	4	6	7	7
Estonia	8	1	0	7	2	15	3
Andorra	8	0	0	8	2	30	0

Remaining games
08.09.07 Croatia-Estonia
08.09.07 England-Israel
08.09.07 Russia-Macedonia
12.09.07 Andorra-Croatia
12.09.07 England-Russia
12.09.07 Macedonia-Estonia
13.10.07 England-Estonia
17.10.07 Croatia-Israel
17.10.07 Macedonia-Andorra
17.10.07 Russia-England
17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

Aug 22 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 3 (Healy 5, 35, Lafferty 56)
Liechtenstein 1 (M Frick 89)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,332. **Ref:** Matejek (Cze)
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Duff, McCartney, Baird, Craigan, Clingan, Gillespie (Jones 85), Davis, Lafferty (Feeney 75), Healy, Brunt (Elliott 62).
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Michael Stocklasa (Oehri 38), Martin Stocklasa, Telser, D'Elia, Polverino, R Buchel, D Frick, Biedermann (S Buchel 62), Rohrer (R Beck 74), M Frick.

GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	7	6	0	1	17	4	18
N Ireland	7	5	1	1	13	8	16
Spain	7	5	0	2	13	6	15
Denmark	6	3	1	2	9	5	10
Liechtenstein	8	1	1	6	5	21	4
Iceland	7	1	1	5	5	15	4
Latvia	6	1	0	5	4	7	3

Remaining games
08.09.07 Iceland-Spain
08.09.07 Latvia-Northern Ireland
08.09.07 Sweden-Denmark
12.09.07 Denmark-Liechtenstein
12.09.07 Iceland-Northern Ireland
12.09.07 Spain-Latvia
13.10.07 Denmark-Spain
13.10.07 Iceland-Latvia
13.10.07 Liechtenstein-Sweden
17.10.07 Denmark-Latvia
17.10.07 Liechtenstein-Iceland
17.10.07 Sweden-Northern Ireland
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	7	5	2	0	14	4	17
Bulgaria	7	4	3	0	11	4	15
Holland	6	4	2	0	8	2	14
Albania	7	2	3	2	8	6	9
Belarus	7	2	1	4	10	15	7
Slovenia	7	1	1	5	5	12	4
Luxembourg	7	0	0	7	1	14	0

Remaining games
08.09.07 Belarus-Romania
08.09.07 Holland-Bulgaria
08.09.07 Luxembourg-Slovenia
12.09.07 Albania-Holland
12.09.07 Bulgaria-Luxembourg
12.09.07 Slovenia-Belarus
13.10.07 Belarus-Luxembourg
13.10.07 Romania-Holland
13.10.07 Slovenia-Albania
17.10.07 Albania-Bulgaria
17.10.07 Holland-Slovenia
17.10.07 Luxembourg-Romania
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts

Finals tournament: June 7-29, 2008

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	3	3	0	0	13	0	9
Gabon	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Madagascar	4	0	0	4	0	14	0

Djibouti withdrew

Remaining game
08.09.07 Gabon-Ivory Coast

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	4	2	2	0	8	2	8
Botswana	5	2	1	2	3	6	7
Burundi	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Mauritania	5	1	1	3	7	9	4

Remaining games
08.09.07 Burundi-Egypt
13.10.07 Egypt-Botswana
13.10.07 Mauritania-Burundi

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	5	4	0	1	8	3	12
Uganda	5	2	2	1	5	2	8
Niger	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Lesotho	5	1	1	3	3	7	4

Remaining games
08.09.07 Nigeria-Lesotho
08.09.07 Uganda-Niger

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	5	4	1	0	10	0	13
Sudan	5	4	0	1	10	2	12
Seychelles	5	1	0	4	2	13	3
Mauritius	5	0	1	4	2	9	1

Remaining games
08.09.07 Mauritius-Seychelles
08.09.07 Sudan-Tunisia

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	5	5	0	0	13	3	15
Eq Guinea	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
Liberia	5	1	1	3	6	9	4
Rwanda	5	1	0	4	6	11	3

Remaining games
08.09.07 Equatorial Guinea-Cameroon
08.09.07 Rwanda-Liberia

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	5	4	1	0	15	3	13
Eritrea	5	2	2	1	5	8	8
Kenya	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Swaziland	5	0	2	3	0	7	2

Remaining games
08.09.07 Kenya-Angola
08.09.07 Swaziland-Eritrea

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	5	2	2	1	7	2	8
Tanzania	5	2	2	1	4	6	8
Mozambique	5	1	3	1	4	4	6
Burkina Faso	5	1	1	3	4	7	4

Remaining games
08.09.07 Senegal-Burkina Faso
08.09.07 Tanzania-Mozambique

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Algeria	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Gambia	5	1	2	2	4	5	5
Cape Verde Is	5	1	2	2	3	6	5

Remaining games
08.09.07 Gambia-Algeria
08.09.07 Guinea-Cape Verde Islands

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	5	2	3	0	8	1	9
Togo	5	3	0	2	7	7	9
Benin	5	2	2	1	8	4	8
Sierra Leone	5	0	1	4	1	12	1

Remaining games
08.09.07 Sierra Leone-Benin
08.09.07 Togo-Mali

Group 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Libya	5	2	1	2	6	5	7
Namibia	5	2	1	2	6	6	7
Ethiopia	5	2	0	3	3	6	6

Remaining games
08.09.07 DR Congo-Libya
08.09.07 Ethiopia-Namibia

Group 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	5	3	2	0	9	1	11
Zambia	5	2	2	1	6	2	8
Congo	5	1	3	1	4	5	6
Chad	5	0	1	4	2	13	1

Remaining games
08.09.07 Chad-Congo
08.09.07 South Africa-Zambia

Group 12

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Malawi	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
Zimbabwe	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Remaining game
08.09.07 Zimbabwe-Malawi

Group winners and the three runners-up with the best record qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts

Finals tournament: January 20-February 10, 2008

COSAFA CASTLE CUP

Group C

In Gaborone, Botswana

Semi-finals

July 28
Botswana 1 (Mogaladi 19)
Namibia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lwanja (Mwi)

July 28
Angola 2 (Manucho 40, Santana 83)
Lesotho 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Disang (Bot)

Third-place play-off

July 29
Namibia 3 (Katupose 53, Bendell 67, 77)
Lesotho 2 (Muso 84, pen 87)
HT: 0-0

Final

July 29
Botswana 0
Angola 0
No aet
Botswana 3-1 on pens

Botswana qualify for overall semi-finals, joining Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia

INDIAN OCEAN GAMES

In Antananarivo, Madagascar

Group A

Aug 10: Seychelles 2 Mayotte 1.
Aug 12: Mauritius 0 Mayotte 1.
Aug 14: Mauritius 3 Seychelles 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mauritius	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
Mayotte	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Seychelles	2	1	0	1	2	4	3

Group B

Aug 10: Comoros Islands 1 Reunion 1.
Aug 12: Madagascar 0 Reunion 0.
Aug 14: Madagascar 3 Comoros Islands 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Madagascar	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Reunion	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Comoros Is	2	0	1	1	1	4	1

Semi-finals

Aug 16: Madagascar 4 Mayotte 0; Mauritius 0 Reunion 1.

Third-place play-off

Aug 18: Mayotte 1 Mauritius 1 (aet; Mayotte 4-2 on pens).

Final

Aug 18
Madagascar 0
Reunion 0
Aet. Reunion 7-6 on pens

FRIENDLIES

Sunday, July 29

July 29 - Antananarivo
Madagascar 0
DR Congo 0

Monday, August 20

Aug 20 - Beira
Mozambique 0
Zimbabwe 0
Mozambique 3-1 on pens

Tuesday, August 21

Aug 21 - Creil, France
Benin 2 (Maiga 21, og 55)
Gabon 2 (Nzigou 4, Mouloungui pen 42)
HT: 1-2

Aug 21 - London
Ghana 1 (Gyan 43)
Senegal 1 (E H Diouf 72)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** D'Urso (Eng)
Ghana: R Kingston - Paintsil, Sarpei (Helegbe 76), Dickson, Illiasu, Essien (Pimpong), L Kingston, Annan (Baruso 90), Gyan, Muntari (Agogo 85), Dramane (Ayew 90).
Senegal: Sylva - Coly (P Mendy 46), N'Daw, Diatta, Diakhate (D Ba 64), P B Diop, Sene (Sall 46), W N'Diaye (I Faye 79), F Mendy (A Sarr), E H Diouf, Sougou (Gueye 46).

Wednesday, August 22

Aug 22 - Tirana
Albania 3 (Salihi 33, Berisha 46, Duro 62)
Malta 0
HT: 1-0
Albania: Beqaj (Hidi 46) - Vangjeli, Dallku, Dede, Skela (Hyka 46), Muka (Bulku 46), Haxhi (Rrustemi 46), Lala (Duro 46), Berisha (Xhafa 67), Bogdani (Salihi 21), Kapllani (Bushi 46).
Malta: M Muscat (Haber 46) - Briffa, Azzopardi (Wellman 79), Said, J Mifsud (Xuereb 46), Pace, G Agius, Barbara (Frendo 46), Mallia (Cohen), Schembri (Bajada), Scerri (Scicluna).

Aug 22 - Montpellier, France
Algeria 0
Brazil 2 (Maicon 62, Ronaldinho 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,392. **Ref:** Biton (Fra)
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Hosni (Amri 66), Bougherra, Bouzid, Yahia (Bezzaz 66), Zarabi, Matmour (Ghilas 76), Mansouri, Ziani (Aissa 86), Belhadj, Saifi (Bouguerra 90).
Brazil: Doni (Julio Cesar 46) - Maicon (Daniel Alves 68), Naldo, Alex Silva, Kleber, Josue (Fernando 46), Mineiro (Lucas 64), Elano (Kaka 46), Julio Baptista (Ronaldinho 46), Vagner Love, Robinho (Diego 70).

Aug 22 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Harnik 78)
Czech Republic 1 (Koller 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,500. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Spa)
Austria: Manninger - Ibertsberger (Linz 49), Prodl, Stranzl, Katzer, Prager (Saumel 46), Aufhauser, Leitgeb (Harnik 74), Standfest, Morz (Salmutter 82), Kuljic.
Czech Republic: P Cech - Ujfalusi, Rozehnal, Grygera (Zapotocny 43), Jarolim, Kovac (Sivok 46), Pitak (Plasil 17), Polak (Matejovski 57), Galasek, Baros, Koller (Fenin 46).

Aug 22 - Minsk
Belarus 2 (Vasilyuk 2, Romaschenko pen 90)
Israel 1 (Gershon pen 29)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000

Aug 22 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 3 (Muslimovic 37, 70, 77)
Croatia 5 (Eduardo 18, Srna 35, 74, N Kovac 73, 81)
HT: 1-2
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Guso (Alaim 46) - Hrgovic (Bartolovic 83), Bajic, Radeljic (Dzeko 46), Berberovic, Rahimic, Damjanovic (Ibricic 46), Custovic, Muslimovic, Misimovic, Zeba (Ibisevic 85).
Croatia: Runje - Corluka, Simic, R Kovac, Simunic, N Kovac, Vranjes, Srna (Pranjic 83), Petric (Olic 72), Eduardo (Babic 63), Budan (Balaban 84).

Aug 22 - Burgas
Bulgaria 0
Wales 1 (Eastwood 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Germanakos (Gre)
Bulgaria: Ivankov (Petkov 46) - Kishishev (Yankov 52), Tunchev, Tomasic, Lucio Wagner (Zanev 54), Yovov (Genkov 66), Telkiyski (Popov 46), S Petrov, Angelov (Iliev 46), M Petrov, Chilikov (Dimitrov 46).
Wales: Hennessey - Ricketts (Eardley 46), Morgan (Evans 46), Gabbidon, Nyatanga, Ledley (M Jones 46), S Davies (Nardiello 66), Crofts, Bale (D Collins 46), Vaughn, Eastwood (Earnshaw 52).

Aug 22 - San Jose
Costa Rica 1 (O Rojas 7)
Peru 1 (P Garcia 57)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mena (CR)
Costa Rica: Alfaro - Fernandez, Chinchilla, Umana, Myrie (Angulo 53), Sirias (Herrera 53), D Fonseca (Eras 61), Centeno, Rojas (Aleman 70), Gomez (A Solis 70), Saborio (Nunez 61).
Peru: Butron - Prado, Villalta, Vilchez, Fernandez (Villamarin 69), Torres, Jayo (Anakaki 65), P Garcia (Franco 87), Hidalgo (Ismodes 59), Gonzalez (Jimenez 65), Fano (Chiroque 55).

Aug 22 - Aarhus
Denmark 0
Republic of Ireland 4 (Keane 29, 40, Long 54, 66)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Einwaller (Aut)
Denmark: Christiansen - Bogelund (Kahlenberg 46), Gravgaard (Kristiansen 46), Agger, N Jensen (Kvist 46), Wurtz (Lovenkrands 68), Rommedahl, D Jensen (Laursen 46), Gronkjaer, Bendtner, Tomasson (Nordstrand 59).
Rep Ireland: Henderson - Carr, O'Shea, Dunne, Finnan (Kilbane 62), Reid (Gibson 46), McGeady, Potter (Kelly 67), Hunt (Keogh 46), K Doyle (Long 46), Keane (Murphy 56).

Aug 22 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 3 (Oneseke 6, Yemweni 52, Mputu 90)
Angola 1 (Flavio 34)
HT: 1-1

Aug 22 - Quito
Ecuador 1 (Urrutia pen 34)
Bolivia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Parra (Col)
Ecuador: Elizaga - Montano, Hurtado, G Espinoza, Bagui, Urrutia (A Bolanos 78), Brand, Mendez (Vaca 82), Lara (Hidalgo 82), Benitez (Guerron 76), F Caicedo (Zura 46; L Bolanos 56). *Sent off: A Bolanos 88min.*
Bolivia: Galarza - Hoyos, Raldes, Mendez, Zabala, Reyes (Pena 57), Mojica (Lima 79), Campos (R Garcia 46), J Vaca (N Suarez 81), Andaveris (Saicedo 68), Arce (Parada 46).

Aug 22 - San Salvador
El Salvador 2 (Anaya 26, Merino 40)
Honduras 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Bonilla (ElS)
El Salvador: Salinas - Anaya, Dubon, Escobar, Pacheco, Merino, Sanchez, Alas, Quintanilla (Medrano 63), Calderon, Cerritos.
Honduras: O Vallecillo (Bodden 46) - Mendoza (Lozano 46), Bernardez, E Vallecillo, Figueroa, E Izaguirre, Claros (Turcios 37), Rodriguez, E Martinez, Mejia, Garcia.

Aug 22 - Wembley
England 1 (Lampard 9)
Germany 2 (Kuranyi 26, Pander 40)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 86,133. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
England: Robinson (James 46) - Richards, Ferdinand (Brown 46), Terry, Shorey, Beckham, Carrick (Barry 55), Lampard, J Cole (Wright-Phillips 70), Owen (Dyer 57), Smith (Crouch 57).
Germany: Lehmann - A Friedrich, Mertesacker, Metzelder, Pander, Lahm, Odonkor (Hilbert 54), Trochowski (Rolfes 72), Schneider (Castro 90), Hitzlsperger, Kuranyi.

Aug 22 - Thessaloniki
Greece 2 (Gekas 17, Katsouranis 43)
Spain 3 (Marchena 37, Silva 66, 90)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Greece: Nikopolidis (Chalkias 46) - Seitaridis (Patsatzoglou 46), Katsouranis (Papadopoulos 65), Dellas (Antzas 46), Kapsis, Torosidis (Vyntra 46), Karagounis, Basinas (Tziolis 78), Zagorakis (Goumas 16), Gekas, Salpingidis.
Spain: Reina - Angel, Marchena, Juanito, Pernia, Albelda (Xabi Alonso 62), Xavi (Luis Garcia 70), Joaquin (Fabregas 82), Silva, Villa (Angulo 76), Fernando Torres (Iniesta 46).

Aug 22 - Budapest
Hungary 3 (Juhasz 61, Gera pen 66, Feczesin 77)
Italy 1 (Di Natale 49)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Hungary: Fulop - Szelesi, Vasko, Juhasz, Vanczak (Csizmadia 73), Vass, Tozser (Leandro 59), Gera (Buzsaky 90), Hajnal (Filkor 59), Dzsudzsak (Halmosi 62), Priskin (Feczesin 73).
Italy: Buffon - Oddo (Grosso 46), Cannavaro, Materazzi (Barzagli 46), Zambrotta, Aquilani (Palombo 67), Pirlo, Ambrosini, Quagliarella, Toni (Inzaghi 46), Del Piero (Di Natale 46).

Aug 22 - Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (Thorvaldsson 65)
Canada 1 (Occean 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,359. **Ref:** Asumaa (Fin)
Iceland: Larusson (Thorgeirsson 46) - Steinsson, Ingimarsson (K O Sigurdsson 85), R Sigurdsson, Hreidarsson (Jonsson 63), Arnason, B B Gunnarsson (H Sigurdsson 68), J K Gudjonsson, Adalsteinsson, Hallfredsson (V P Gunnarsson 85), Thorvaldsson (Vidarsson 80).
Canada: Onstad - Stalteri, Imhof, Hainault, Klukowski, De Guzman, Bernier, Hume (Occean 60), Nakajima-Farran, Radzinski (Ledgerwood 72), Gerba.

Aug 22 - Paris
Ivory Coast 0
Egypt 0
Egypt: El-Hadary - El-Mohammady, Gomaa, H Said (Fathallah), S Mohamed, Abou Moslem, A Hassan, Shawki, Abd Rabbou (Hamza), Zidan (Zaki), Motaeb (Gamal).

Aug 22 - Oita
Japan 2 (Tulio Tanaka 25, Yamase 89)
Cameroon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,240. **Ref:** Choi (SKo)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Nakazawa, Tulio Tanaka, Kaji, Komano (Konno 46), Abe, Endo (K Nakamura 63), K Suzuki (Hashimoto 74), Okubo (Yamase 50), Tatsuya Tanaka (Sato 59), Maeda (Takamatsu 59).
Cameroon: Souleymanou - Song, Matoukou, Atouba, Bikey (Feutchine 53), Makoun (N'Guemo 63), M'Bia, M'Bami (Idrissou 46), Eto'o, Job (Bilayi-Ateba 74), Douala (Ngom Kome 59).

Aug 22 - Riga
Latvia 1 (Astafjevs 31)
Moldova 2 (Frunza 23, Bordian 53)
HT: 0-0

Aug 22 - Kaunas
Lithuania 2 (Danilevicius 42, 47)
Turkmenistan 1 (Nikitenko 90)
HT: 1-0

Aug 22 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Georgia 0
Georgia: Lomaia - Kvirkvelia, Khizaneishvili, Khizanishvili, Kaladze, Tskitishvili (Menteshashvili 78), Kobiashvili (Amisulashvili 31), Burduli (Martsvaladze 46), Asatiani (Mujiri 46), A Iashvili, Siradze (Gigiadze 46).

Aug 22 - Skopje
Macedonia 0
Nigeria 0

Aug 22 - Paris
Mali 3 (S Keita, Diallo, Dramane Traore)
Burkina Faso 2 (Sanou, Coulibaly)
HT: 2-0

Aug 22 - Denver, USA
Mexico 0
Colombia 1 (Castrillon 52)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Mexico: Ochoa - Esparza, Aldrete, Magallon, Dominguez, Torrado, Cerda (Villaluz 46), Araujo (Hernandez 57), Bravo (Fernandez 76), Landin (Esqueda 65), C G Rodriguez (Castillo 65).
Colombia: Julio - Moreno, Mosquera, Velez (Enriquez 77), Vallejo, Amaya, Anchico, Rodallega (Montero 80), Valencia (Falcao Garcia 46), Castrillon (Cordoba 70), Torres (Araujo 61).

Aug 22 - Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Vucinic pen 28)
Slovenia 1 (Vrsic 42)
HT: 1-1
Montenegro: Poleksic - Pavicevic (Lakic 87), Batak, Tanasijevic, Jovanovic (Pejovic 65), Tumbasevic, Boskovic (Vlahovic 80), Vukcevic, Bozovic, Vucinic, Purovic (Radonjic 74).
Slovenia: Handanovic - Ilic (Brecko 53), Morec (Mihelic 84), Cipot, Jokic (Kokot 65), Stevanovic (Sukalo 80), Zlogar, Kirm, Vrsic (Lazic 80), Lavric, Birsa (Semler 53).

Aug 22 - Oslo
Norway 2 (Carew pen 11, 58)
Argentina 1 (M Rodriguez 84)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,932. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)
Norway: Opdal (Jarstein 46) - Storbaek, R Johnsen, Hangeland, J A Riise, B H Riise (Tettey 73), Andresen, Haestad, Braaten (Bjorkoy 90), Carew (Solli 83), Gamst Pedersen (Strand 73).
Argentina: Ustari - Zanetti, Garay, Burdisso, G Milito, L Gonzalez (Insua 46), Mascherano, M Rodriguez, Messi, Lavezzi (Saviola 46), D Milito (Gago 79).

Aug 22 - Panama City
Panama 2 (Blanco 31, Herrera pen 52)
Guatemala 1 (Montepeque 23)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Rodriguez (CR)
Panama: Penedo (Calderon 46) - Baloy, Moreno (Vasquez 78), Herrera (Castillo 73), Rivera, R Torres, Escobar (Barahona 78), Blanco, G Torres, Perez, Aguilar (Quintero 83).
Guatemala: Motta - N Martinez, G Cabrera, Medina, Albizuris, Noriega (Quinonez 56), Thompson (Villatoro 85), Avila (Sandoval 60), Romero (Contreras 58), Montepeque (Figueroa 66), Ruiz.

Aug 22 - Ciudad del Este
Paraguay 1 (A Da Silva 24)
Venezuela 1 (Fedor 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Paraguay: Lapczik - M Caceres (Baez 55), Aguilar, Cabrera, D Cardozo, Villalba (Martinez 55), Gavilan, A Ortiz (Irrazabal 70), Ramos, Lopez (Bogado 75), A Da Silva (Ayala 64).
Venezuela: Morales - Vallenilla (Rosales 67), Rey, Vielma, Rojas, E Perez, M Mea Vitali (Jimenez 74), C Gonzalez (Moreno 77), Guerra (Arias 85), Perozo (Fuenmayor 72), Fedor (Arismendi 70).

Aug 22 - Bucharest
Romania 2 (Dica 61, Mutu 70)
Turkey 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Romania: Lobont - Marin, Goian, Chivu (Radu 62), Rat, Codrea (Lazar 66), Radoi (D Munteanu 46), F Petre (Nicolita 46), Dica (Cristea 79), Mutu, Marica (Niculescu 81).
Turkey: Serdar - Sabri (Gokdeniz 81), Gokhan Zan, Ibrahim Toraman, Ibrahim Uzulmez (Volkan Yaman 67), Mehmet Topuz (Huseyin 71), Hamit Altintop, Emre Belozoglu (Nihat 41), Arda (Tumer 46), Tuncay, Gokhan Unal (Halil Altintop 71).

Aug 22 - Moscow
Russia 2 (Sychev 21, Pavlyuchenko 34)
Poland 2 (Krzynowek 72, Blaszczykowski 77)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Russia: Gabulov (Shunin 46) - V Berezutsky (Anyukov 46; Vorobyev 84), Kolodin, A Berezutsky (Torbinsky 56), Saenko, Semshov, Arshavin, Bilyaletdinov, Zhirkov (Zyryanov 46), Sychev, Pavlyuchenko (Pogrebnyak 46).
Poland: Boruc (Kuszczak 46) - Golanski (Wasilewski 46), Dudka, Bak (Michal Zewlakow 46), Bronowicki, Blaszczykowski, Sobolewski (Jop 67), Iwanski (Lobodzinski 67), Lewandowski, Krzynowek, Matusiak (Piszczek 76).

Aug 22 - Aberdeen
Scotland 1 (Boyd 71)
South Africa 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Scotland: Gordon - Hutton, Anderson, McManus, McEveley, Brown (Teale 72), G Caldwell (Robson 56), Fletcher, McFadden (Pearson 46), Miller (Boyd 66), O'Connor (Beattie 66).
South Africa: Fernandez - Nzama, Mokoena, Mhlongo, Carnell, Pienaar (Modise 76), Zothwane, Sibaya, Buckley (Sheppard 76), Nkosi (Fanteni 76), Zuma.

Aug 22 - Trnava
Slovakia 0
France 1 (Henry 39)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,064. **Ref:** Egorov (Rus)
Slovakia: Senecky - Krajcik (Brezinsky 85), Klimpl, Durica, Had (Zofcak 68), Sestak (Holosko 46), Sapara, Hamsik, Mintal (Slovak 46), Cech, Vittek.
France: Landreau - Clerc (Sagna 63), Mexes (Boumsong 88), Abidal, Evra, Ribery (Nasri 73), Vieira (Toulalan 59), Makelele, Malouda, Anelka, Henry (Benzema 85).

Aug 22 - Khartoum
Sudan 1 (Al-Tahir 78)
Libya 0
HT: 0-0

Aug 22 - Gothenburg
Sweden 1 (Kallstrom 56)
United States 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,648. **Ref:** Blom (Hol)
Sweden: Shaaban - M Nilsson (Concha 46), Mellberg, P Hansson (Majstorovic 46), Edman, D Andersson, Bakircioglu, Kallstrom, Wilhelmsson (Alexandersson 46), Ibrahimovic (Rosenberg 66), Elmander (Djuric 76).
United States: Howard - Cherundolo, Onyewu, Bocanegra (DeMerit 76), Bornstein (Spector 64), Feilhaber, Bradley, Mastroeni (Convey 46), Beasley (Zizzo 76), Donovan (Hill 64), Dempsey (Davies 85).

Aug 22 - Geneva
Switzerland 2 (Barnetta pen 9, 51)
Holland 1 (Kuijt 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Switzerland: Coltorti - P Degen (Lichtsteiner 69), Senderos (Cabanas 88), Von Bergen, Magnin, Gelson Fernandes (Huggel 67), Inler, Margairaz (H Yakin 81), Barnetta (Spycher 73), N'Kufo (Streller 56), Vonlanthen.
Holland: Stekelenburg - Jaliens (Boulahrouz 46), Bouma, Heitinga, Emanuelson, De Zeeuw, Van Bronckhorst, Sneijder (Seedorf 46), Van der Vaart (Babel 46), Van Nistelrooy (Kuijt 46), Van Persie.

Aug 22 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 2 (Barotov 18, Saidov 31)
Azerbaijan 3 (S Aliev 25, 29, Subasic 43)
HT: 2-3

Aug 22 - Lome
Togo 3 (Ayite 29, 41, Olufade 84)
Zambia 1 (Mwanza 5)
HT: 2-1

Aug 22 - Rades
Tunisia 1 (Mnari 23)
Guinea 1 (Diawara 45)
HT: 1-1

Aug 22 - Kiev
Ukraine 2 (Hladkiy 30, Rotan 65)
Uzbekistan 1 (Geynrikh 90)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Banari (Mol)
Ukraine: Piatov - Yezerskyi, Kucher, Rusol (Hrystai 46), Nesmachnyi, Danylovskyi (Shelaiev 46), Mykhalyk (Husiev 46), Nazarenko, Kalinichenko (Rotan 62), Hladkiy (Voronin 46), Shevchenko (Vorobei 55).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Harulla Karimov, Suyunov, Gafurov, Bayramov, Hasanov (Solomin 46), Karpenko (Geynrikh 58), Hamza Karimov (Hashimov 55), Inomov, Kapadze, Shatskikh (Bakaev 46).

CLUB FOOTBALL
EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd qualifying round
1st legs - July 31/August 1; 2nd legs - August 7/8
Astana (Kaz) v Rosenborg (Nor)
1-3, 1-7 (agg 2-10)
Besiktas (Tur) v Sheriff (Mol)
1-0, 3-0 (agg 4-0)
FC Copenhagen (Den) v Beitar Jerusalem (Isr)
1-0, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-1)
Debrecen (Hun) v Elfsborg (Swe)
0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1)
Domzale (Sln) v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
1-2, 1-3 (agg 2-5)
FH (Ice) v BATE Borisov (Bls)
1-3, 1-1 (agg 2-4)
Genk (Blg) v Sarajevo (Bos)
1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; Sarajevo on away goals)
Pyunik (Arm) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
0-2, 1-2 (agg 1-4)
Rangers (Sco) v Zeta (Mne)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Red Star Belgrade (Ser) v Levadia Tallinn (Est)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Red Star on away goals)
Tampere United (Fin) v Levski Sofia (Bul)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Ventspils (Lat) v Salzburg (Aut)
0-3, 0-4 (agg 0-7)
Zaglebie Lubin (Pol) v Steaua Bucharest (Rom)
0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3)
Zilina (Slk) v Slavia Prague (Cze)
0-0, 0-0 (agg 0-0; Slavia 4-3 on pens)

UEFA CUP

1st qualifying round

1st legs - July 19; 2nd legs - August 2

Aktobe (Kaz) v Mattersburg (Aut)
1-0, 2-4 (agg 3-4)
Artmedia (Slk) v Zimbru Chisinau (Mol)
1-1, 2-2 (agg 3-3; Artmedia on away goals)
B36 (Far) v Ekranas (Lit)
1-3, 2-3 (agg 3-6)
Banants (Arm) v Young Boys (Swi)
1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5)
Belchatow (Pol) v Ameri Tbilisi (Geo)
2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2; Belchatow 4-2 on pens)
Bezanija (Ser) v Besa (Alb)
2-2, 0-0 (agg 2-2; Besa on away goals)
Buducnost (Mne) v Hajduk Split (Cro)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Carmarthen (Wal) v Brann (Nor)
0-8, 3-6 (agg 3-14)
Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) v Vaduz (Lie)
2-0, 0-0 (agg 2-0)
Dungannon Swifts (NI) v Suduva (Lit)
1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4)
Flora Tallinn (Est) v Valerenga (Nor)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Glentoran (NI) v AIK Stockholm (Swe)
0-5, 0-4 (agg 0-9)
Gorica (Sln) v Rabotnicki (Mac)
1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4)
Hacken (Swe) v KR (Ice)
1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Helsingborgs (Swe) v Trans Narva (Est)
6-0, 3-0 (agg 9-0)
HJK Helsinki (Fin) v Etzella Ettelbruck (Lux)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Keflavik (Ice) v Midtjylland (Den)
3-2, 1-2 (agg 4-4; Midtjylland on away goals)
Libertas (SaM) v Drogheda United (Ire)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
Lillestrom (Nor) v Kaerjeng (Lux)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Kaerjeng on away goals)
Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat) v Dinamo Brest (Bls)
1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)
MKT Araz (Aze) v Groclin Grodzisk (Pol)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
MTK (Hun) v Mika Ashtarak (Arm)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Mika on away goals)
MyPa (Fin) v EB/Streymur (Far)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Nistru Otaci (Mol) v Honved (Hun)
1-1, 1-1 (agg 2-2; Honved 5-4 on pens)
Omonia (Cyp) v Rudar Pljevlja (Mne)
2-0, 2-0 (agg 4-0)
Rhyl (Wal) v Haka (Fin)
3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3; Haka on away goals)
Ried (Aut) v Neftchi (Aze)
3-1, 1-2 (agg 4-3)
Santa Coloma (And) v Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr)
1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4)
Siroki Brijeg (Bos) v Koper (Sln)
3-1, 3-2 (agg 6-3)
Skonto Riga (Lat) v Dinamo Minsk (Bls)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Slaven (Cro) v Teuta (Alb)
6-2, 2-2 (agg 8-4)
Sliema Wanderers (Mlt) v Litex Lovech (Bul)
0-3, 0-4 (agg 0-7)
St Patrick's Athletic (Ire) v OB Odense (Den)
0-0, 0-5 (agg 0-5)
Vardar (Mac) v Anorthosis (Cyp)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Vojvodina (Ser) v Hibernians (Mlt)
5-1, 2-0 (agg 7-1)
Zlate Moravce (Slk) v Alma Ata (Kaz)
3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2)
*Zrinjski (Bos) v Partizan Belgrade (Ser)
1-6, 0-5 (agg 1-11)

**Partizan were subsequently expelled from the competition because of their fans' hooliganism during the first leg; Zrinjski entered 2nd qualifying round*

INTERTOTO CUP

3rd round

1st legs - July 21; 2nd legs - July 29

Cherno More (Bul) v Sampdoria (Ita)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Chornomorets (Ukr) v Lens (Fra)
0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)
Dacia Chisinau (Mol) v Hamburg (Ger)
1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5)
Gent (Blg) v AaB (Den)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Gloria Bistrita (Rom) v Atletico Madrid (Spa)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Atletico on away goals)
Hajduk Kula (Ser) v Uniao Leiria (Por)
1-0, 1-4 (agg 2-4)
Hammarby (Swe) v Utrecht (Hol)
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Hammarby on away goals)
Otelul Galati (Rom) v Trabzonspor (Tur)
2-1, 2-1 (agg 4-2)
Rapid Wien (Aut) v Rubin Kazan (Rus)
3-1, 0-0 (agg 3-1)
Tobol (Kaz) v OFI (Gre)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Vetra (Lit) v Blackburn (Eng)
0-2, 0-4 (agg 0-6)

All winning teams entered UEFA Cup at 2nd qualifying round stage

AUSTRIA

July 27: Ried 0 Austria Wien 1.
July 28: Mattersburg 2 Sturm Graz 2; Salzburg 2 LASK Linz 1.
July 29: Altach 2 Wacker Innsbruck 1.
Aug 1: Altach 0 Rapid Wien 1.
Aug 3: Wacker Innsbruck 1 Austria Karnten 1.
Aug 4: Sturm Graz 0 Salzburg 0.
Aug 5: Rapid Wien 0 Austria Wien 0; LASK Linz 1 Ried 0; Mattersburg 4 Altach 1.
Aug 8: Rapid Wien 4 Austria Karnten 0.
Aug 10: Austria Wien 6 Wacker Innsbruck 1.
Aug 11: Salzburg 2 Ried 0; Austria Karnten 1 Mattersburg 1; Sturm Graz 3 Altach 1.
Aug 12: LASK Linz 2 Rapid Wien 0.
Aug 17: Altach 4 Austria Karnten 1.
Aug 18: Wacker Innsbruck 1 LASK Linz 2.
Aug 19: Mattersburg 0 Austria Wien 1; Rapid Wien 1 Salzburg 0; Ried 5 Sturm Graz 3.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	7	3	4	0	13	6	13
Rapid Wien	7	4	1	2	11	6	13
LASK Linz	7	4	1	2	8	8	13
Mattersburg	7	3	3	1	14	10	12
Salzburg	7	3	2	2	10	6	11
Sturm Graz	7	2	4	1	14	10	10
Ried	7	3	0	4	12	11	9
Altach	7	2	0	5	11	17	6
A Karnten	7	1	2	4	4	14	5
Wacker	7	0	3	4	7	16	3

BELGIUM

Friday, August 3

Mechelen 0
Anderlecht 1 (Wasilewski 90) Att: 12,500

Saturday, August 4

FC Brussels 0
Westerlo 1 (Van Imschoot 55) Att: 5,500

Charleroi 1 (Smolders 1)
Roeselare 1 (Akgul 72) Att: 8,158

Club Brugge 2 (Sterchele 26, 58)
Mons 1 (Zoko 44) Att: 24,880

Dender 1 (De Storme 53)
Germinal Beerschot 2 (Gerets og 59, Malki Sabah 79) Att: 4,500

Genk 3 (Bosnjak 7, Soetaers 21, Caillet 34)
Cercle Brugge 1 (De Smet 24) Att: 21,000

Lokeren 2 (Tambwe 32, Joao Carlos pen 71)
St Truiden 1 (Coulibaly 64) Att: 5,000

Sunday, August 5

Mouscron 1 (Custovic pen 9)
Gent 4 (Gregoire 8, 16, Zewlakow 69, Vermouth 90) Att: 5,594

Zulte Waregem 1 (Jelavic 33)
Standard 4 (Fellaini 36, Onyewu 48, De Camargo 51, Witsel 85) Att: 7,500

Friday, August 10

Westerlo 1 (Evens 11)
Charleroi 0 Att: 5,000

Saturday, August 11

Anderlecht 1 (Tchite 79)
Lokeren 0 Att: 24,498

Cercle Brugge 2 (Gombami 3, Serebrennikov pen 90)
Zulte Waregem 0 Att: 5,000

Gent 5 (Grncarov 34, Zewlakow 57, Gregoire 68, Olufade 70, Azofeifa 90)
Genk 0 Att: 12,000

Mons 1 (Brahami 53)
Mechelen 1 (Dunkovic 70) Att: 4,500

Roeselare 3 (Tanghe 9, 44, Kpaka 75)
Dender 1 (Stuckens 87) Att: 5,000

St Truiden 0
Mouscron 2 (Tomou Bayard 59, Oussalah 64) Att: 6,500

Standard 4 (Jovanovic 10, pen 34, pen 72, Fellaini 69)
FC Brussels 1 (Culek 59) Att: 20,000

Sunday, August 12

Germinal Beerschot 0
Club Brugge 1 (Leko pen 78) Att: 12,000

Friday, August 17

Club Brugge 3 (Alcaraz 8, Geraerts 47, Leko pen 72)
St Truiden 2 (Chimedza 20, Coulibaly 33) Att: 25,204

Saturday, August 18

FC Brussels 0
Gent 2 (Gregoire 69, Moia 89) Att: 5,000

Charleroi 1 (Akpala 89)
Mechelen 0 Att: 10,000

Dender 2 (De Storme 23, Munyaneza 43)
Anderlecht 2 (Hassan 11, Boussoufa 19) Att: 6,000

Genk 0
Roeselare 0 Att: 24,000

Lokeren 0
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 5,000

Mouscron 3 (Custovic pen 13, Tomou Bayard 30, Coto 87)
Mons 1 (Dalmat pen 34) Att: 5,104

Zulte Waregem 1 (Matthijs 19)
Westerlo 0 Att: 6,000

Sunday, August 19

Standard 4 (Mbokani 2, 44, Fellaini 22, Witsel 56)
Cercle Brugge 1 (Iachtchouk 37) Att: 24,202

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gent	3	3	0	0	11	1	9
Standard	3	3	0	0	12	3	9
Club Brugge	3	3	0	0	6	3	9
Anderlecht	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Mouscron	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Westerlo	3	2	0	1	2	1	6
Roeselare	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Charleroi	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Germinal B	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Lokeren	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Genk	3	1	1	1	3	6	4
Cercle Brugge	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Zulte Waregem	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
Mechelen	3	0	1	2	1	3	1
Dender	3	0	1	2	4	7	1
Mons	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
St Truiden	3	0	0	3	3	7	0
FC Brussels	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS

4 Christophe Gregoire (Gent)
3 Marouane Fellaini (Standard)
3 Milan Jovanovic (Standard)

SUPER CUP

July 28 - Brussels

Anderlecht 3 (Boussoufa 4, Mpenza 38, Hassan 89)
Club Brugge 1 (Djokic 49)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Verbist

BULGARIA

Aug 11: Vihren 0 Levski 1; Lovech 1 CSKA 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Pirin 1 Cherno More 0; Spartak Varna 2 Botev 2; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Marek 0.
Aug 12: Belasitsa 1 Chernomorets Burgas 6; Slavia 2 Beroe 0.
Aug 18: Chernomorets Burgas 1 Spartak Varna 0; Levski 1 Beroe 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Slavia 1; Marek 0 Pirin 2.
Aug 19: Botev 5 Vidima-Rakovski 0; CSKA 2 Belasitsa 0; Cherno More 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Vihren 2 Lovech 1.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chernomorets	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Pirin	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Levski	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Botev	2	1	1	0	7	2	4
CSKA	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Slavia	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Lok Sofia	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Vihren	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
V-Rakovski	2	1	0	1	1	5	3
Lok Plovdiv	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Lovech	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Spartak Varna	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Cherno More	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Beroe	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Marek	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Belasitsa	2	0	0	2	1	8	0

CROATIA

July 28: Dinamo 5 Zadar 1; Rijeka 3 Cibalia 0; Varteks 1 Osijek 2; Slaven 2 Medimurje 0; Sibenik 0 Zagreb 0; Hajduk 7 Inter 1.
Aug 4: Medimurje 4 Varteks 1; Zadar 2 Sibenik 2; Osijek 2 Rijeka 2; Inter 0 Dinamo 4.
Aug 5: Cibalia 0 Hajduk 0; Zagreb 0 Slaven 2.
Aug 10: Dinamo 2 Cibalia 1.
Aug 11: Zadar 3 Inter 0; Hajduk 1 Osijek 0; Rijeka 3 Medimurje 1; Varteks 0 Zagreb 1; Sibenik 0 Slaven 2.
Aug 17: Inter 2 Sibenik 2.
Aug 18: Zagreb 2 Rijeka 2; Cibalia 0 Zadar 2.
Aug 19: Slaven 6 Varteks 0; Medimurje 1 Hajduk 1; Osijek 1 Dinamo 3.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	5	5	0	0	19	3	15
Slaven	5	4	0	1	12	1	12
Rijeka	5	3	2	0	11	5	11
Hajduk	5	2	3	0	9	2	9
Zagreb	5	2	2	1	6	4	8
Zadar	5	2	2	1	8	7	8
Osijek	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Medimurje	5	1	1	3	6	10	4
Cibalia	5	1	1	3	2	7	4
Sibenik	5	0	3	2	4	11	3
Inter	5	0	1	4	3	17	1
Varteks	5	0	0	5	2	14	0

DENMARK

July 28: FC Copenhagen 3 Viborg 1.
July 29: OB 3 Horsens 3; Nordsjaelland 0 Lyngby 1; Midtjylland 5 Brondby 0.
July 30: Esbjerg 2 AGF 2.
Aug 1: Randers 5 AaB 0.
Aug 4: AGF 0 FC Copenhagen 1.
Aug 5: Esbjerg 1 Randers 3; Horsens 1 AaB 1; Midtjylland 1 Viborg 0; Brondby 3 Lyngby 0.
Aug 6: OB 3 Nordsjaelland 0.
Aug 8: Midtjylland 2 AaB 1.
Aug 11: FC Copenhagen 5 Esbjerg 2.
Aug 12: Randers 0 OB 0; Nordsjaelland 1 Midtjylland 1; Lyngby 0 Horsens 0; AaB 2 AGF 0.
Aug 13: Viborg 1 Brondby 1.
Aug 18: Brondby 0 AGF 1.
Aug 19: Viborg 2 Horsens 1; FC Copenhagen 0 Midtjylland 0; Randers 1 Nordsjaelland 1; AaB 2 OB 3.
Aug 20: Lyngby 1 Esbjerg 6.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Randers	6	4	2	0	14	2	14
OB	6	3	3	0	12	6	12
Midtjylland	6	3	2	1	10	4	11
Copenhagen	6	3	2	1	10	5	11
Esbjerg	6	3	1	2	17	11	10
Horsens	6	2	3	1	9	8	9
Nordsjaelland	6	1	3	2	5	8	6
Brondby	6	1	2	3	6	10	5
AaB	6	1	2	3	7	12	5
Lyngby	6	1	2	3	3	13	5
AGF	6	1	1	4	4	9	4
Viborg	6	1	1	4	4	13	4

ENGLAND

Saturday, August 11

Aston Villa 1 (Barry pen 85)
Liverpool 2 (Laursen og 31, Gerrard 87) Att: 42,640

Bolton 1 (Anelka 50)
Newcastle 3 (N'Zogbia 11, Martins 21, 27) Att: 25,414

Derby 2 (Oakley 5, Todd 84)
Portsmouth 2 (Mwaruwari 27, Utaka 83) Att: 32,176

Everton 2 (Osman 26, Anichebe 75)
Wigan 1 (Sibierski 80) Att: 39,220

Middlesbrough 1 (Downing 31)
Blackburn 2 (Santa Cruz 62, Derbyshire 79) Att: 25,058

Sunderland 1 (Chopra 90)
Tottenham 0 Att: 43,967

West Ham 0
Manchester City 2 (Bianchi 18, Geovanni 87) Att: 34,921

Sunday, August 12

Arsenal 2 (Van Persie pen 83, Hleb 90)
Fulham 1 (Healy 1) Att: 60,093

Chelsea 3 (Pizarro 18, Malouda 31, Essien 50)
Birmingham 2 (Forssell 15, Kapo 36) Att: 41,590

Manchester United 0
Reading 0 Att: 75,655

Tuesday, August 14

Tottenham 1 (Gardner 26)
Everton 3 (Lescott 3, Osman 37, Stubbs 45) Att: 35,716

Wednesday, August 15

Birmingham 2 (McShane og 28, O'Connor 82)
Sunderland 2 (Chopra 75, John 90) Att: 24,898

Fulham 2 (Healy 23, Smertin 26)
Bolton 1 (Helguson 12) Att: 21,102

Manchester City 1 (Johnson 43)
Derby 0 Att: 43,620

Portsmouth 1 (Mwaruwari 53)
Manchester United 1 (Scholes 15) Att: 20,510

Reading 1 (Bikey 29)
Chelsea 2 (Lampard 47, Drogba 50) Att: 24,031

Wigan 1 (Sibierski 55)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 14,007

Saturday, August 18

Birmingham 0
West Ham 1 (Noble pen 70) Att: 24,961

Fulham 1 (McBride 16)
Middlesbrough 2 (Hossam 55, Cattermole 88) Att: 20,948

Newcastle 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 51,049

Portsmouth 3 (Kanu 16, Utaka 30, Taylor pen 88)
Bolton 1 (Anelka 13) Att: 17,108

Reading 1 (Hunt 44)
Everton 0 Att: 22,813

Tottenham 4 (Malbranque 2, 6, Jenas 14, Bent 79)
Derby 0 Att: 35,600

Wigan 3 (Heskey 19, Landzaat pen 62, Sibierski pen 69)
Sunderland 0 Att: 18,639

Sunday, August 19

Blackburn 1 (Dunn 72)
Arsenal 1 (Van Persie 18) Att: 24,917

Liverpool 1 (Fernando Torres 16)
Chelsea 1 (Lampard pen 62) Att: 43,924

Manchester City 1 (Geovanni 31)
Manchester United 0 Att: 44,955

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Chelsea	3	2	1	0	6	4	7
Wigan	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Everton	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Portsmouth	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Newcastle	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Arsenal	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Blackburn	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Liverpool	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Reading	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Sunderland	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Tottenham	3	1	0	2	5	4	3
Fulham	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Middlesbrough	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
West Ham	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Man Utd	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Aston Villa	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Birmingham	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Derby	3	0	1	2	2	7	1
Bolton	3	0	0	3	3	8	0

LEADING GOALSCORER
3 Antoine Sibierski (Wigan)

COMMUNITY SHIELD

Aug 5 - Wembley
Chelsea 1 (Malouda 45)
Manchester United 1 (Giggs 35)
No aet. **HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 80,731. **Ref:** Halsey
Man Utd 3-0 on pens

FRANCE

Saturday, August 4

Bordeaux 1 (Bellion 30)
Lens 0 Att: 30,654

Caen 1 (Compan 81)
Nice 0 Att: 19,101

Lille 0
Lorient 0 Att: 14,215

Monaco 1 (Piquionne 44)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Feindouno pen 47) Att: 17,137

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 37,400

Rennes 0
Nancy 2 (Fortune 37, Hadji 41) Att: 23,605

Strasbourg 0
Marseille 0 Att: 26,395

Valenciennes 3 (Audel 3, 28, 54)
Toulouse 1 (Dieuze 11) Att: 12,153

Sunday, August 5

Le Mans 1 (Basa 27)
Metz 0 Att: 12,000

Lyon 2 (Baros 32, Benzema 70)
Auxerre 0 Att: 35,537

Saturday, August 11

Auxerre 0
Bordeaux 2 (Wendel 45, 52) Att: 11,506

Lorient 2 (Saifi 15, 30)
Monaco 1 (Gakpe 66) Att: 11,981

Marseille 0
Rennes 0 Att: 55,896

Nancy 1 (Kim 7)
Caen 0 Att: 17,545

Nice 1 (Hognon 86)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 11,815

Saint-Etienne 3 (Gomis 19, Feindouno 69, 90)
Valenciennes 1 (Audel 87) Att: 30,143

Sochaux 1 (Birsa 18)
Le Mans 3 (De Melo pen 30, 51, 61) Att: 14,033

Toulouse 1 (Elmander 90)
Lyon 0 Att: 24,980

Sunday, August 12

Lens 0
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 38,624

Metz 1 (N'Diaye 84)
Lille 2 (Bastos 20, Maric 89) Att: 15,656

Wednesday, August 15

Bordeaux 1 (Bellion 14)
Le Mans 2 (De Melo 49, Grafite 72) Att: 30,425

Lille 1 (Dumont 26)
Sochaux 1 (Dalmat 45) Att: 12,029

Monaco 2 (Modesto 32, Piquionne 85)
Metz 0 Att: 11,392

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Pauleta 35)
Lorient 3 (Vahirua 69, 71, Saifi pen 90) Att: 32,227

Rennes 1 (Hansson 3)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 28,316

Strasbourg 3 (Renteria 23, 67, Gameiro 90)
Auxerre 0 Att: 20,045

Valenciennes 2 (Savidan 60, 86)
Marseille 1 (Ziani 57) Att: 16,018

Thursday, August 16

Nancy 2 (Puygrenier 51, Berenguer 66)
Nice 1 (Bamogo pen 62) Att: 18,389

Saturday, August 18

Auxerre 1 (Maoulida 34)
Caen 0 Att: 7,432

Le Mans 1 (Grafite 58)
Lille 1 (Fauvergue 34) Att: 10,724

Lorient 2 (Vahirua 14, 65)
Lyon 1 (Benzema 32) Att: 14,612

Metz 0
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Att: 19,018

Saint-Etienne 0
Bordeaux 0 Att: 32,630

Sochaux 0
Monaco 3 (Koller 2, 89, Menez 57) Att: 14,091

Toulouse 1 (Gignac 34)
Strasbourg 3 (Mouloungui 20, Fanchone 53, Gameiro 72) Att: 16,260

Sunday, August 19

Lens 0
Valenciennes 0 Att: 37,000

Marseille 2 (Niang 23, Cisse 50)
Nancy 2 (Gavanon pen 64, Hadji 80) Att: 55,732

Nice 1 (Kone 25)
Rennes 1 (Briand 86) Att: 10,835

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Le Mans	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Lorient	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Nancy	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Monaco	4	2	1	1	7	3	7
Strasbourg	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Bordeaux	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Valenciennes	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Lille	4	1	3	0	4	3	6
Saint-Etienne	4	1	2	1	4	3	5
Rennes	4	1	2	1	2	3	5
Nice	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Lyon	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Marseille	4	0	3	1	3	4	3
Caen	3	1	0	2	1	2	3
Paris SG	4	0	3	1	1	3	3
Toulouse	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
Auxerre	4	1	0	3	1	7	3
Lens	3	0	2	1	0	1	2
Sochaux	4	0	2	2	2	7	2
Metz	4	0	1	3	1	5	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
4 Johan Audel (Valenciennes)
4 Tulio De Melo (Le Mans)
4 Marama Vahirua (Lorient)
3 Pascal Feindouno (Saint-Etienne)
3 Rafik Saifi (Lorient)

SUPER CUP

July 28 - Lyon
Lyon 2 (Govou 21, Cris 44)
Sochaux 1 (Birsa 14)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 30,413. **Ref:** Biton

GERMANY

Friday, August 10

Stuttgart 2 (Khedira 63, Pardo pen 67)
Schalke 2 (Kobiashvili 25, Rakitic 76) Att: 57,500

Saturday, August 11

Bayer Leverkusen 0
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 3 (Toni 14, Klose 66, 85)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 69,000

Bochum 2 (Sestak 47, Bechmann 49)
Werder Bremen 2 (Diego pen 39, Sanogo 45) Att: 29,037

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Amanatidis 31)
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 45,900

Hannover 0
Hamburg 1 (Benjamin 23) Att: 49,000

Wolfsburg 1 (Radu 84)
Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Wichniarek 38, Eigler 50, Kirch 80) Att: 20,921

Sunday, August 12

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Kringe 86)
Duisburg 3 (Ishiaku 8, 64, Tararache pen 62) Att: 75,700

Nurnberg 0
Karlsruhe 2 (Hajnal 44, 74) Att: 45,419

Friday, August 17

Karlsruhe 1 (Franz 37)
Hannover 2 (Hanke 55, Balitsch 75) Att: 27,800

Saturday, August 18

Arminia Bielefeld 2 (Kucera 68, Wichniarek 80)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Meier 86, Russ 89) Att: 21,200

Duisburg 1 (Lavric 88)
Wolfsburg 3 (Marcelinho 41, Madlung 51, Radu 72) Att: 23,050

Hansa Rostock 1 (Orestes 62)
Nurnberg 2 (Galasek 17, Kluge 26) Att: 25,000

Hertha Berlin 3 (Chahed pen 51, Fathi 64, Okoronkwo 80)
Stuttgart 1 (Hitzlsperger 16) Att: 46,734

Schalke 4 (Bordon 11, Pander 32, Asamoah 59, Kuranyi 78)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Haedo Valdez 66) Att: 61,482

Werder Bremen 0
Bayern Munich 4 (Ribery pen 31, Toni 51, Altintop 79, Ottl 87) Att: 42,100

Sunday, August 19

Energie Cottbus 1 (Skela 49)
Bochum 2 (Bechmann 14, 42) Att: 16,382

Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart pen 64)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 52,700

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	2	2	0	0	7	0	6
Hamburg	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Schalke	2	1	1	0	6	3	4
A Bielefeld	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Bochum	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
E Frankfurt	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Hertha	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Karlsruhe	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Duisburg	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Wolfsburg	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Hannover	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Nurnberg	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
E Cottbus	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
B Leverkusen	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Stuttgart	2	0	1	1	3	5	1
W Bremen	2	0	1	1	2	6	1
H Rostock	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
B Dortmund	2	0	0	2	2	7	0

LEADING GOALSCORER
3 Tommy Bechmann (Bochum)

LEAGUE CUP – Final

July 28 - Leipzig
Schalke 0
Bayern Munich 1 (Klose 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 43,500. **Ref:** Meyer

HOLLAND

Friday, August 17
Heerenveen 0
Willem II 0 Att: 23,500

Saturday, August 18
AZ 4 (Agustien 6, Ari 32, pen 58, Medunjanin 78)
VVV 0 Att: 16,496

Excelsior 0
Twente 2 (N'Kufo 9, pen 70) Att: 2,639

NAC 0
Groningen 3 (Lovre 45, Nevland 72, Fledderus 90) Att: 15,109

NEC 1 (Van Beukering 38)
Roda JC 1 (Lamah 85) Att: 12,000

Sunday, August 19
De Graafschap 1 (De Groot 72)
Ajax 8 (Huntelaar 36, 70, pen 90, 90, Suarez 42, Maduro 55, 59, Bakircioglu 61) Att: 11,000

Heracles 0
PSV 2 (Afellay 83, Zonneveld 90) Att: 8,485

Sparta 1 (Dissels 19)
Vitesse 2 (Van der Schaaf 76, Swerts 82) Att: 8,912

Utrecht 0
Feyenoord 3 (Bruins 25, Hofs 62, Makaay 85) Att: 23,000

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	1	1	0	0	8	1	3
AZ	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Feyenoord	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Groningen	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
PSV	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Twente	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Vitesse	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
NEC	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Roda JC	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Heerenveen	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Willem II	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sparta	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Excelsior	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Heracles	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
NAC	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Utrecht	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
VVV	1	0	0	1	0	4	0
De Graafschap	1	0	0	1	1	8	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
4 Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Ajax)
2 Ari (AZ)
2 Hedwiges Maduro (Ajax)
2 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)

SUPER CUP

Aug 11 - Amsterdam
Ajax 1 (Gabri 43)
PSV 0
HT: 1-0

HUNGARY

July 27: Ujpest 1 Zalaegerszeg 1; Debrecen 2 Gyor 0.
July 28: Tatabanya 0 Nyiregyhaza 1; Paks 1 MTK 4; Diosgyor 0 Siofok 3.
July 29: Sopron 0 Honved 1.
July 30: Rakospalota 2 Vasas 0; Fehervar 1 Kaposvar 1.
Aug 3: Siofok 1 Debrecen 1; Zalaegerszeg 4 Diosgyor 1.
Aug 4: Nyiregyhaza 2 Rakospalota 0; Gyor 2 Tatabanya 1; Kaposvar 2 Paks 1; Vasas 2 Sopron 0.
Aug 5: Honved 5 Fehervar 1.
Aug 6: MTK 0 Ujpest 0.
Aug 10: Diosgyor 2 MTK 2.
Aug 11: Rakospalota 3 Tatabanya 2; Sopron 1 Nyiregyhaza 1; Fehervar 5 Vasas 2; Paks 0 Honved 3; Debrecen 3 Zalaegerszeg 2; Siofok 0 Gyor 1.
Aug 13: Ujpest 0 Kaposvar 2.
Aug 17: MTK 3 Debrecen 2.
Aug 18: Nyiregyhaza 0 Fehervar 1; Gyor 2 Rakospalota 1; Tatabanya 0 Sopron 1; Zalaegerszeg 2 Siofok 0; Kaposvar 1 Diosgyor 1.
Aug 19: Honved 1 Ujpest 4.
Aug 20: Vasas 3 Paks 2.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honved	5	4	0	1	13	5	12
MTK	5	3	2	0	11	5	11
Zalaegerszeg	5	3	1	1	12	6	10
Debrecen	5	3	1	1	10	7	10
Kaposvar	5	2	3	0	7	4	9
Gyor	4	3	0	1	5	4	9
Vasas	5	3	0	2	10	10	9
Ujpest	5	2	2	1	9	6	8
Nyiregyhaza	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Fehervar	5	2	1	2	8	10	7
Rakospalota	5	2	0	3	6	9	6
Sopron	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Siofok	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
Diosgyor	5	0	2	3	5	12	2
Tatabanya	5	0	0	5	4	10	0
Paks	5	0	0	5	5	15	0

ITALY

SUPER CUP

Aug 18 - Milan
Inter 0
Roma 1 (De Rossi pen 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000

NORWAY

July 28: Lillestrom 1 Odd Grenland 1; Tromso 2 Rosenborg 1.
July 29: Viking 2 Start 0; Aalesund 4 Sandefjord 1; Stromsgodset 2 Brann 4; Stabaek 2 Valerenga 2.
July 30: Lyn 0 Fredrikstad 0.
Aug 4: Rosenborg 3 Stabaek 0.
Aug 5: Odd Grenland 2 Lyn 0; Fredrikstad 2 Aalesund 1; Sandefjord 4 Viking 1; Start 1 Tromso 1; Valerenga 2 Brann 0.
Aug 6: Lillestrom 2 Stromsgodset 0.
Aug 11: Brann 3 Rosenborg 2.
Aug 12: Viking 2 Fredrikstad 2; Stromsgodset 1 Valerenga 2; Tromso 2 Sandefjord 1; Aalesund 2 Odd Grenland 1; Lyn 0 Lillestrom 4.
Aug 13: Stabaek 1 Start 1.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	17	11	2	4	35	29	35
Lillestrom	17	9	5	3	29	13	32
Stabaek	17	8	6	3	25	22	30
Viking	17	8	4	5	30	27	28
Rosenborg	17	7	4	6	34	26	25
Tromso	17	7	3	7	27	27	24
Fredrikstad	17	5	8	4	25	24	23
Lyn	17	6	4	7	27	28	22
Valerenga	17	5	6	6	17	19	21
Aalesund	17	6	3	8	26	31	21
Stromsgodset	17	6	3	8	21	29	21
Odd Grenland	17	4	3	10	19	21	15
Start	17	3	6	8	20	28	15
Sandefjord	17	4	3	10	21	32	15

POLAND

July 27: Groclin 1 Ruch Chorzow 4; Zaglebie Lubin 2 Widzew 1.
July 28: Jagiellonia 2 Polonia Bytom 1; Odra 2 LKS 2; Lech 4 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 2; Belchatow 2 Korona 0.
July 29: Legia 1 Cracovia 0.
Aug 3: Korona 1 Lech 0.
Aug 4: LKS 0 Polonia Bytom 0; Odra 1 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 0; Cracovia 1 Ruch Chorzow 0; Zaglebie Lubin 0 Wisla Krakow 1.
Aug 5: Jagiellonia 1 Groclin 3; Widzew 0 Belchatow 0; Gornik Zabrze 0 Legia 3.
Aug 10: Wisla Krakow 4 Korona 0; Ruch Chorzow 1 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 0.
Aug 11: Jagiellonia 1 LKS 0; Polonia Bytom 1 Cracovia 0; Belchatow 0 Zaglebie Lubin 1; Lech 4 Gornik Zabrze 1; Odra 1 Widzew 1.
Aug 12: Legia 1 Groclin 0.
Aug 14: Wisla Krakow 2 Gornik Zabrze 0.
Aug 17: Gornik Zabrze 1 Ruch Chorzow 0; LKS 0 Legia 1.
Aug 18: Widzew 1 Wisla Krakow 3; Cracovia 2 Jagiellonia 0; Zaglebie Sosnowiec 1 Polonia Bytom 0; Zaglebie Lubin 1 Lech 1; Korona 2 Odra 0.
Aug 19: Groclin 0 Belchatow 0.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	4	4	0	0	10	1	12
Legia	4	4	0	0	6	0	12
Lech	4	2	1	1	9	5	7
Zaglebie L	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Ruch C	4	2	0	2	5	3	6
Cracovia	4	2	0	2	3	2	6
Jagiellonia	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
Korona	4	2	0	2	3	6	6
Belchatow	4	1	2	1	2	1	5
Odra	4	1	2	1	4	5	5
Polonia B	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
Groclin	4	1	1	2	4	6	4
Gornik Z	4	1	0	3	2	9	3
LKS	4	0	2	2	2	4	2
Widzew	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Zaglebie S*	4	1	0	3	3	6	-1

**4pts deducted for the club's part in Poland's match-fixing scandal*

PORTUGAL

Friday, August 17
Sporting Lisbon 4 (Derlei 26, Liedson 45, Tonel 68, Joao Moutinho pen 90)
Academica 1 (Gyano 83)

Saturday, August 18
Leixoes 1 (Nwoko 90)
Benfica 1 (Petit 89)

Maritimo 3 (Makukula 15, 40, Edigle 25)
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Dede 49)

Nacional 0
Estrela Amadora 0

Sporting Braga 1 (Joao Pinto 49)
Porto 2 (Quaresma 34, 84)

Sunday, August 19
Guimaraes 1 (Fajardo 4)
Setubal 1 (Matheus 25)

Uniao Leiria 0
Boavista 0

Monday, August 20
Naval 1 (Paulao 89)
Belenenses 1 (Fernando 79)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Lisbon	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Maritimo	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Porto	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Belenenses	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Benfica	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Guimaraes	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Leixoes	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Naval	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Setubal	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Boavista	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
E Amadora	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Nacional	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Uniao Leiria	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sporting Braga	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Pacos Ferreira	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Academica	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
2 Ariza Makukula (Maritimo)
2 Ricardo Quaresma (Porto)

SUPER CUP

Aug 11 - Leiria
Porto 0
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Izmailov 75)
HT: 0-0

ROMANIA

July 27: Vaslui 2 UTA 2; Steaua 2 Ceahlaul 1.
July 28: Dacia 1 Rapid 2; Univ Craiova 4 Farul 0.
July 29: Univ Cluj 1 Pandurii 1; Gloria Buzau 1 Dinamo 2; Poli Timisoara 3 Poli Iasi 1.
Aug 1: Otelul 0 CFR Cluj 1.
Aug 2: Gloria Bistrita 2 Urziceni 2.
Aug 3: Ceahlaul 4 Gloria Buzau 0; Farul 0 Steaua 1.
Aug 4: UTA 1 Dacia 0; Poli Iasi 2 Univ Craiova 1; Dinamo 0 Vaslui 2.
Aug 5: Pandurii 1 Otelul 0; Rapid 2 Gloria Bistrita 2; Urziceni 3 Univ Cluj 2; CFR Cluj 2 Poli Timisoara 2.
Aug 10: Dacia 2 Vaslui 2; Ceahlaul 0 Dinamo 3.
Aug 11: Poli Timisoara 3 Pandurii 1; Otelul 3 Urziceni 2; Gloria Bistrita 2 UTA 1; Steaua 1 Poli Iasi 0.
Aug 12: Univ Cluj 1 Rapid 2; Gloria Buzau 1 Farul 0; Univ Craiova 1 CFR Cluj 3.
Aug 17: Urziceni 4 Poli Timisoara 1; Poli Iasi 3 Gloria Buzau 0.
Aug 18: Dinamo 1 Dacia 1; Vaslui 2 Gloria Bistrita 0; Pandurii 2 Univ Craiova 0.
Aug 19: Rapid 4 Otelul 2; UTA 1 Univ Cluj 1; Farul 2 Ceahlaul 0; CFR Cluj 0 Steaua 0.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	4	3	1	0	10	6	10
Steaua	4	3	1	0	4	1	10
Vaslui	4	2	2	0	8	4	8
CFR Cluj	4	2	2	0	6	3	8
Urziceni	4	2	1	1	11	8	7
Dinamo	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Poli Timisoara	4	2	1	1	9	8	7
Pandurii	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Poli Iasi	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
UTA	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Gloria Bistrita	4	1	2	1	6	7	5
Univ Craiova	4	1	0	3	6	7	3
Ceahlaul	4	1	0	3	5	7	3
Otelul	4	1	0	3	5	8	3
Farul	4	1	0	3	2	6	3
Gloria Buzau	4	1	0	3	2	9	3
Univ Cluj	4	0	2	2	5	7	2
Dacia	4	0	2	2	4	6	2

RUSSIA

July 28: Luch-Energiya 1 Spartak Moscow 1; Zenit 0 Amkar 0; Lokomotiv 2 Dinamo 2.
July 29: Tom 1 Rostov 1; CSKA 0 Khimki 0; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Saturn 1; Kuban 4 FC Moscow 1.
Aug 1: Khimki 0 Rubin 0.
Aug 3: Saturn 2 Kuban 0.
Aug 4: Rostov 1 Kryliya Sovetov 1; Amkar 1 Luch-Energiya 0; Dinamo 4 Zenit 2.
Aug 5: Spartak Nalchik 1 CSKA 1; FC Moscow 2 Rubin 1; Spartak Moscow 3 Tom 2.
Aug 11: Khimki 1 Dinamo 0; Lokomotiv 3 Spartak Nalchik 1; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Spartak Moscow 2; Zenit 3 Luch-Energiya 1.
Aug 12: CSKA 2 FC Moscow 0; Rubin 0 Saturn 1; Kuban 1 Rostov 0; Tom 0 Amkar 1.
Aug 18: Spartak Nalchik 1 Khimki 1; Saturn 2 CSKA 2; Amkar 4 Kryliya Sovetov 1; Dinamo 1 Luch-Energiya 0.
Aug 19: FC Moscow 1 Lokomotiv 2; Rostov 1 Rubin 1; Spartak Moscow 4 Kuban 0; Zenit 2 Tom 1.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak M	21	12	6	3	33	19	42
Zenit	21	10	7	4	35	27	37
Dinamo	21	9	6	6	28	20	33
FC Moscow	21	9	6	6	24	24	33
CSKA	21	7	10	4	25	19	31
Lokomotiv	21	8	6	7	28	29	30
Amkar	21	7	9	5	21	16	30
Saturn	21	6	10	5	22	21	28
Rubin	20	7	4	9	20	20	25
Khimki	21	5	10	6	20	19	25
Kuban	21	5	9	7	18	25	24
Kryliya S	21	6	5	10	21	29	23
Spartak N	20	5	8	7	18	23	23
Luch-Energiya	21	5	6	10	18	24	21
Tom	21	4	9	8	24	26	21
Rostov	21	1	11	9	15	29	14

SCOTLAND

Saturday, August 4
Dundee United 1 (Robertson 90)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 12,496

Gretna 0
Falkirk 4 (Higdon 14, 24, Moutinho 66, Latapy 74) Att: 2,731

Inverness 0
Rangers 3 (Ferguson 16, 90, Novo 64) Att: 7,711

St Mirren 0
Motherwell 1 (McGarry 3) Att: 5,257

Sunday, August 5
Celtic 0
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 60,000

Monday, August 6
Hearts 0
Hibernian 1 (Kerr 2) Att: 17,000

Saturday, August 11
Falkirk 1 (Higdon 5)
Celtic 4 (Milne og 30, Miller 76, Nakamura 79, Vennegoor of Hesselink 81) Att: 6,329

Hibernian 4 (Zemmama 64, 82, Fletcher 66, McCann 90)
Gretna 2 (Yantorno 17, McMenamin 49) Att: 13,795

Motherwell 2 (O'Donnell 85, McCormack 90)
Inverness 1 (Tokely 82) Att: 4,259

Rangers 2 (Ferguson 52, Cousin 80)
St Mirren 0 Att: 47,772

Sunday, August 12
Aberdeen 1 (Nicholson 19)
Hearts 1 (Stewart 45) Att: 13,134

Monday, August 13
Kilmarnock 2 (Gibson 79, Nish 87)
Dundee United 1 (Hunt 50) Att: 5,557

Saturday, August 18
Dundee United 0
Hibernian 0 Att: 8,405

Hearts 1 (Driver 73)
Gretna 1 (Barr 79) Att: 16,407

Motherwell 1 (Clarkson 23)
Kilmarnock 2 (Lilley 60, Dodds 90) Att: 4,985

Rangers 7 (Cousin 2, 54, Whittaker 34, Boyd 75, Darcheville 88, 90, Broadfoot 90)
Falkirk 2 (Riera 44, Barrett 72) Att: 47,419

St Mirren 2 (Miranda 19, Corcoran 55)
Inverness 1 (Cowie 58) Att: 3,309

Sunday, August 19
Aberdeen 1 (Brewster 24)
Celtic 3 (Donati 61, Miller 85, 90) Att: 16,232

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	3	3	0	0	12	2	9
Celtic	3	2	1	0	7	2	7
Hibernian	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Kilmarnock	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Motherwell	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Dundee Utd	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
St Mirren	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Falkirk	3	1	0	2	7	11	3
Hearts	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Aberdeen	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Gretna	3	0	1	2	3	9	1
Inverness	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
3 Daniel Cousin (Rangers)
3 Barry Ferguson (Rangers)
3 Michael Higdon (Falkirk)
3 Kenny Miller (Celtic)

SERBIA

Aug 11: Smederevo 0 Mladost Lucani 0; Red Star 0 Cukaricki 0; Vojvodina 0 Partizan 1; Bezanija 1 OFK 2; Hajduk Kula 2 Napredak 0.
Aug 17: OFK 2 Borac 0.
Aug 18: Red Star 1 Smederevo 0; Mladost Lucani 0 Hajduk Kula 0; Napredak 1 Bezanija 0; Cukaricki 0 Partizan 3.
Aug 19: Banat 1 Vojvodina 1.

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
OFK	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Hajduk K	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Red Star	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Napredak	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Mladost L	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Banat	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Vojvodina	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Smederevo	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Cukaricki	2	0	1	1	0	3	1
Bezanija	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Borac	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

SPAIN

SUPER CUP

1st leg - Aug 11
Sevilla 1 (Luis Fabiano pen 28)
Real Madrid 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Perez Burrull

2nd leg - Aug 19
Real Madrid 3 (Drenthe 24, Cannavaro 44, Sergio Ramos 79)
Sevilla 5 (Renato 17, 27, Kanoute pen 37, 82, 90)
HT: 2-3. **Att:** 69,000. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco
Sent off: Pepe (Real Madrid) 90min
Sevilla 6-3 on agg

SWEDEN

July 30: Halmstads 2 GAIS 2; Kalmar 0 Gefle 1.
July 31: IFK Gothenburg 2 Orebro 0.
Aug 1: Hammarby 1 Malmo 0.
Aug 4: Elfsborg 2 Kalmar 2.
Aug 5: Orebro 3 Hammarby 1; Trelleborgs 1 Halmstads 1.
Aug 6: Gefle 0 IFK Gothenburg 2; GAIS 1 Djurgardens 1; AIK 3 Brommapojkarna 0.
Aug 7: Malmo 1 Helsingborgs 1.
Aug 11: Kalmar 0 IFK Gothenburg 5.
Aug 12: GAIS 0 Helsingborgs 3; Brommapojkarna 3 Orebro 1; AIK 1 Gefle 0.
Aug 13: Djurgardens 1 Hammarby 0; Halmstads 1 Malmo 3.
Aug 16: IFK Gothenburg 1 Djurgardens 1.
Aug 18: Malmo 2 Brommapojkarna 0; Elfsborg 5 GAIS 1.
Aug 19: Helsingborgs 5 Kalmar 0; Gefle 1 Trelleborgs 0; Orebro 1 AIK 4; Hammarby 0 Halmstads 1.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Elfsborg	18	9	5	4	30	19	32
Djurgardens	18	9	5	4	24	15	32
Halmstads	18	9	5	4	27	20	32
IFK Goth'burg	18	8	5	5	31	20	29
AIK	18	8	4	6	22	19	28
Malmo	18	7	6	5	23	16	27
Helsingborgs	18	7	5	6	32	23	26
Kalmar	18	8	2	8	23	26	26
Hammarby	18	7	3	8	22	19	24
Gefle	18	6	5	7	16	19	23
GAIS	18	5	6	7	17	25	21
Bromm'karna	18	4	4	10	15	34	16
Trelleborgs	18	4	3	11	18	31	15
Orebro	18	3	6	9	17	31	15

SWITZERLAND

July 28: Grasshopper 0 Sion 1; Basle 1 Aarau 1.
July 29: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Zurich 1; Lucerne 2 Young Boys 2.
July 31: Thun 1 St Gallen 0.
Aug 4: Sion 1 Neuchatel Xamax 1; St Gallen 1 Lucerne 2; Zurich 3 Thun 1.
Aug 5: Young Boys 5 Basle 1; Aarau 2 Grasshopper 2.
Aug 7: Thun 0 Sion 1.
Aug 10: Zurich 3 St Gallen 1.
Aug 11: Neuchatel Xamax 3 Young Boys 1; Basle 3 Sion 2.
Aug 12: Thun 2 Aarau 5; Lucerne 3 Grasshopper 3.
Aug 18: St Gallen 2 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Aarau 0 Lucerne 0.
Aug 19: Young Boys 0 Thun 0; Grasshopper 2 Basle 0; Sion 0 Zurich 5.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	6	4	1	1	16	5	13
Basle	6	3	1	2	9	10	10
Sion	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Young Boys	6	2	3	1	12	9	9
Grasshopper	6	2	2	2	11	9	8
Neuchatel X	6	1	4	1	8	7	7
Aarau	6	1	4	1	9	9	7
Lucerne	6	1	4	1	9	11	7
Thun	6	1	2	3	5	10	5
St Gallen	6	1	0	5	4	12	3

TURKEY

Aug 10: Istanbul BB 2 Fenerbahce 0.
Aug 11: Besiktas 1 Konyaspor 0; Ankaraspor 1 Ankaragucu 2.
Aug 12: Gaziantepspor 2 Kasimpasa 0; Kayserispor 3 Manisaspor 1; Denizlispor 0 Bursaspor 0; Galatasaray 4 Rizespor 0; Genclerbirligi 1 Genclerbirligi Oftas 2.
Aug 17: Genclerbirligi Oftas 0 Trabzonspor 2.
Aug 18: Fenerbahce 2 Gaziantepspor 1.
Aug 19: Bursaspor 0 Galatasaray 1; Sivasspor 2 Istanbul BB 1; Rizespor 0 Genclerbirligi 2; Ankaragucu 3 Denizlispor 2; Manisaspor 2 Ankaraspor 1; Konyaspor 1 Kayserispor 1; Kasimpasa 1 Besiktas 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Ankaragucu	2	2	0	0	5	3	6
Besiktas	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Kayserispor	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Trabzonspor	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Gaziantepspor	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Genclerbirligi	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Istanbul BB	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Sivasspor	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Manisaspor	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Fenerbahce	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
G'ligi Oftas	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Denizlispor	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Konyaspor	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Bursaspor	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Ankaraspor	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Kasimpasa	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Rizespor	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

UKRAINE

July 27: Shakhtar 3 Zorya 0.
July 28: Arsenal 3 Naftovyk 0; Vorskla 0 Tavriya 0; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 FC Kharkiv 0; Karpaty 3 Kryvbas 0.
July 29: Dnipro 4 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Metalist 1 Zakarpattya 0.
Aug 1: Chornomorets 0 Dynamo 0.
Aug 3: Metalurh Donetsk 3 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.
Aug 4: Zorya 3 Arsenal 1; Tavriya 4 Kryvbas 3; FC Kharkiv 1 Karpaty 0; Vorskla 1 Metalist 1.
Aug 5: Zakarpattya 0 Shakhtar 1; Naftovyk 0 Chornomorets 1; Dynamo 1 Dnipro 3.
Aug 10: Chornomorets 1 Zorya 0.
Aug 11: Arsenal 7 Zakarpattya 0; Shakhtar 2 Vorskla 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Dynamo 1; Dnipro 2 Naftovyk 0.
Aug 12: Metalist 3 Tavriya 0; Kryvbas 1 FC Kharkiv 1; Karpaty 0 Metalurh Donetsk 0.
Aug 17: Vorskla 2 Arsenal 1.
Aug 18: Zakarpattya 2 Chornomorets 0; Tavriya 1 FC Kharkiv 0; Naftovyk 0 Metalurh Zaporizhya 1; Metalurh Donetsk 0 Kryvbas 1.
Aug 19: Zorya 0 Dnipro 1; Metalist 1 Shakhtar 3; Dynamo 7 Karpaty 3.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dnipro	6	6	0	0	14	3	18
Shakhtar	6	5	1	0	13	3	16
Metalist	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Tavriya	6	3	1	2	7	8	10
Metalurh Z	6	3	1	2	3	4	10
Dynamo	6	2	3	1	12	9	9
Metalurh D	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
FC Kharkiv	6	2	2	2	4	4	8
Chornomorets	6	2	2	2	2	3	8
Arsenal	6	2	1	3	15	10	7
Zorya	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Zakarpattya	6	2	1	3	3	9	7
Vorskla	6	1	4	1	5	5	7
Karpaty	6	1	1	4	7	11	4
Kryvbas	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
Naftovyk	6	0	0	6	0	12	0

SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, August 3
Banfield 0
Estudiantes 3 (Maggiolo 74, Sanguinetti og 82, Veron pen 90)

Colon Santa Fe 0
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Escudero 51)

Saturday, August 4
Argentinos Juniors 0
San Martin 1 (Tonelotto 26)

Gimnasia La Plata 0
Tigre 1 (Galmarini 63)

Independiente 5 (Denis 17, 34, Sosa 45, Montenegro 81, 87)
Lanus 3 (Acosta 15, Salomon 38, Peralta 60)

Sunday, August 5
Boca Juniors 0
Rosario Central 0

Huracan 1 (Gomez 6)
Arsenal 1 (Carrera 1)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Vangioni 89)
San Lorenzo 0

Olimpo 0
Racing Club 2 (Sava 82, Pellerano 84)

Friday, August 10
Arsenal 2 (Calderon 21, Ulloa 83)
Colon Santa Fe 0

San Martin 1 (Tonelotto 69)
San Lorenzo 2 (Gomez og 73, Fernandez 80)

Saturday, August 11
Racing Club 0
Banfield 1 (Civelli 85)

Rosario Central 2 (Diaz 15, Vizcarra 67)
Gimnasia La Plata 2 (Silva 42, Batalla 88)

Velez Sarsfield 3 (Escudero 7, Zapata 45, Sena 83)
Olimpo 0

Sunday, August 12
Argentinos Juniors 3 (Delorte 14, Battion 48, 72)
Boca Juniors 2 (Ledesma 13, pen 55)

Estudiantes 1 (Brana 80)
Gimnasia Jujuy 0

Lanus 1 (Valeri 39)
Huracan 1 (Mendoza 42)

Tigre 0
Independiente 3 (Sosa 5, Denis 31, 65)

Friday, August 17
Gimnasia La Plata 0
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Delorte 22, Battion 88)

Independiente 1 (Denis 78)
Rosario Central 0

Saturday, August 18
Banfield 1 (Devaca 31)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Gandin 56, Centurion 76)
Lanus 1 (Sand pen 19)

Huracan 0
Tigre 0

Olimpo 1 (Torales 48)
Arsenal 0

Sunday, August 19
Boca Juniors 1 (Ledesma 21)
San Martin 0

Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Carranza 57, Desvaux 65)
Racing Club 1 (Sava 44)

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Donnet 27, Steinert 81)
Estudiantes 1 (Badell 48)

San Lorenzo 1 (Silvera 23)
River Plate 1 (Ortega pen 57)

Thursday, August 23
Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Carranza 45, Pieters 60)
River Plate 2 (Rosales 42, Zarate 72)

ARGENTINA – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Independiente	3	3	0	0	9	3	9
Estudiantes	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Velez Sarsfield	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Argentinos Jnrs	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Newell's OB	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Banfield	3	2	0	1	2	3	6
Arsenal	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Gimnasia J	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Boca Juniors	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
San Lorenzo	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Tigre	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
Racing Club	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Huracan	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
San Martin	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Colon Santa Fe	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
Olimpo	3	1	0	2	1	5	3
River Plate	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Rosario Central	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Lanus	3	0	1	2	5	8	1
Gimnasia LP	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS

5 German Denis (Independiente)
3 Roberto Battion (Argentinos Juniors)
3 Pablo Ledesma (Boca Juniors)

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 28: Real Mamore 1 Jorge Wilstermann 0; Aurora 2 Blooming 0.
July 29: Bolivar 0 La Paz 2; San Jose 3 Destroyers 1; Universitario 4 The Strongest 1; Oriente 2 Real Potosi 1.
Aug 3: Jorge Wilstermann 3 Oriente 1.
Aug 5: La Paz 1 Real Mamore 0; Real Potosi 4 Bolivar 1; The Strongest 4 San Jose 0; Destroyers 1 Aurora 2; Blooming 2 Universitario 1.
Aug 11: La Paz 1 San Jose 0.
Aug 12: Blooming 2 Oriente 1; The Strongest 2 Bolivar 0; Universitario 1 Real Potosi 1; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Aurora 0.
Aug 13: Destroyers 3 Real Mamore 2.

BOLIVIA – CLOSING – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blooming	4	3	0	1	5	4	9
The Strongest	4	2	1	1	9	6	7
Aurora	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
San Jose	4	2	0	2	7	7	6
Universitario	4	1	1	2	7	8	4
Destroyers	4	1	0	3	5	8	3

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Paz	4	4	0	0	5	0	12
J Wilstermann	4	2	0	2	6	5	6
Oriente	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Real Potosi	4	1	1	2	6	5	4
Real Mamore	4	1	0	3	3	5	3
Bolivar	4	1	0	3	4	9	3

BRAZIL

July 27: Sao Paulo 3 Sport Recife 1; Atletico Mineiro 3 Fluminense 0.
July 28: Santos 1 Nautico 2; Gremio 1 Atletico Paranaense 1; Vasco da Gama 4 Goias 1.
July 29: Corinthians 2 Flamengo 2; Parana 1 Atletico Mineiro 3; America 0 Sao Paulo 1; Fluminense 1 Figueirense 1; Sport Recife 1 Internacional 5; Cruzeiro 3 Botafogo 2; Juventude 1 Palmeiras 1.
Aug 1: Palmeiras 1 Sport Recife 2; Atletico Paranaense 2 Corinthians 2; Goias 2 Parana 0; Botafogo 4 America 2; Nautico 0 Fluminense 0; Atletico Mineiro 1 Santos 2; Internacional 0 Vasco da Gama 2.
Aug 2: Sao Paulo 3 Juventude 1; Figueirense 1 Gremio 0.
Aug 4: Corinthians 1 Goias 0; Sport Recife 3 Atletico Paranaense 2; America 1 Nautico 5.
Aug 5: Parana 0 Botafogo 0; Fluminense 0 Palmeiras 1; Cruzeiro 3 Internacional 2; Santos 3 Flamengo 0; Juventude 1 Atletico Mineiro 2; Gremio 0 Sao Paulo 2; Vasco da Gama 2 Figueirense 2.
Aug 8: Atletico Paranaense 2 Flamengo 0; Goias 3 Atletico Mineiro 2; Botafogo 0 Sao Paulo 2; Nautico 4 Figueirense 2; Cruzeiro 2 Sport Recife 0; Juventude 0 Fluminense 0.
Aug 9: Gremio 3 America 0; Palmeiras 1 Internacional 1; Santos 2 Parana 0; Vasco da Gama 2 Corinthians 0.
Aug 11: Flamengo 2 Nautico 1; Sport Recife 3 Juventude 0; Sao Paulo 2 Atletico Paranaense 0.
Aug 12: Corinthians 2 Gremio 1; Parana 0 Vasco da Gama 0; America 1 Cruzeiro 2; Fluminense 3 Santos 0; Atletico Mineiro 1 Palmeiras 2; Figueirense 1 Botafogo 1; Internacional 1 Goias 0.
Aug 15: Botafogo 2 Corinthians 3.
Aug 16: Fluminense 0 Flamengo 1.
Aug 18: Atletico Paranaense 1 Figueirense 1; Santos 2 Sport Recife 0; Gremio 2 Parana 0.
Aug 19: Palmeiras 2 Flamengo 1; Goias 0 Sao Paulo 0; Botafogo 1 Internacional 1; Nautico 0 Atletico Mineiro 1; Cruzeiro 4 Fluminense 2; Juventude 2 Corinthians 2; Vasco da Gama 2 America 0.
Aug 23: Flamengo 4 Juventude 0.

BRAZIL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	20	12	5	3	24	7	41
Cruzeiro	19	11	2	6	44	35	35
Vasco	19	10	4	5	35	21	34
Botafogo	20	9	7	4	39	28	34
Palmeiras	20	9	6	5	27	24	33
Gremio	20	9	4	7	20	20	31
Santos	20	9	3	8	29	26	30
Goias	20	9	3	8	28	25	30
At Mineiro	20	8	4	8	30	28	28
Internacional	20	8	4	8	27	26	28
Sport Recife	20	8	3	9	33	36	27
Corinthians	20	6	9	5	24	26	27
Fluminense	20	6	8	6	24	20	26
Figueirense	20	6	7	7	29	33	25
Parana	20	6	6	8	21	25	24
At Paranaense	20	5	8	7	30	29	23
Flamengo	18	5	6	7	26	30	21
Nautico	20	5	5	10	28	35	20
Juventude	20	4	5	11	21	37	17
America	20	3	1	16	16	44	10

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 28: Lota Schwager 1 Audax Italiano 2; Univ de Chile 2 Antofagasta 0; Coquimbo Unido 0 Univ de Concepcion 1; Univ Catolica 3 Dep La Serena 1.
July 29: Everton 0 Union Espanola 0; Puerto Montt 2 Palestino 1; Dep Concepcion 0 Colo Colo 3; Dep Melipilla 2 Nublense 0; Santiago Wanderers 2 O'Higgins 3.
Aug 4: Huachipato 3 Cobreloa 0; Union Espanola 1 Dep Melipilla 2; Dep La Serena 2 Dep Concepcion 1; O'Higgins 1 Cobresal 1; Audax Italiano 1 Univ de Chile 1; Univ de Concepcion 1 Everton 1.
Aug 5: Colo Colo 2 Coquimbo Unido 1; Palestino 1 Univ Catolica 1; Antofagasta 5 Santiago Wanderers 0; Nublense 3 Lota Schwager 2.
Aug 11: Coquimbo Unido 2 Palestino 3; Lota Schwager 0 Univ Catolica 1; Santiago Wanderers 0 Dep Concepcion 0; Union Espanola 1 O'Higgins 2; Univ de Chile 1 Puerto Montt 0.
Aug 12: Cobreloa 2 Dep La Serena 0; Cobresal 2 Colo Colo 1; Dep Melipilla 1 Antofagasta 1; Everton 1 Audax Italiano 2; Nublense 2 Huachipato 1.
Aug 15: Antofagasta 0 Coquimbo Unido 1; Cobresal 2 Dep Melipilla 0; Colo Colo 2 Univ de Concepcion 2; Dep Concepcion 4 Huachipato 3; Dep La Serena 1 Univ de Chile 1; Palestino 1 Nublense 1; Puerto Montt 0 Santiago Wanderers 0; Univ Catolica 3 Everton 1.
Aug 16: Audax Italiano 2 Union Espanola 0.
Aug 18: O'Higgins 1 Dep La Serena 0; Univ Catolica 3 Nublense 0; Univ de Chile 5 Dep Concepcion 2; Univ de Concepcion 2 Puerto Montt 0.
Aug 19: Cobreloa 2 Cobresal 2; Coquimbo Unido 0 Santiago Wanderers 3; Dep Melipilla 0 Lota Schwager 0; Everton 0 Antofagasta 1; Huachipato 2 Palestino 1; Union Espanola 2 Colo Colo 2.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	6	3	2	1	14	8	11
Cobresal	5	2	2	1	8	6	8
S Wanderers	6	2	2	2	6	8	8
La Serena	6	2	1	3	6	9	7
Puerto Montt	5	1	1	3	3	6	4

GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Catolica	6	4	1	1	11	4	13
U Concepcion	5	2	3	0	7	4	9
Dep Melipilla	6	2	2	2	6	8	8
D Concepcion	5	1	1	3	7	13	4
U Espanola	6	0	2	4	5	10	2

GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Audax Italiano	5	4	1	0	9	4	13
Univ de Chile	6	3	3	0	11	5	12
Palestino	6	1	3	2	9	10	6
Cobreloa	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Everton	6	0	2	4	3	9	2

GROUP 4	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
O'Higgins	5	4	1	0	9	4	13
Antofagasta	6	3	1	2	9	4	10
Nublense	6	3	1	2	8	10	10
Huachipato	5	3	0	2	11	8	9
Coquimbo U	6	1	0	5	5	11	3
L Schwager	5	0	2	3	5	8	2

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 28: Indep Santa Fe 0 At Nacional 2; At Huila 1 At Junior 0.
July 29: Chico 1 Bucaramanga 1; Cucuta 2 Quindio 0; Pereira 0 Once Caldas 3; La Equidad 1 America 0; Real Cartagena 1 Tolima 0; Dep Cali 4 Dep Pasto 4; Indep Medellin 2 Millonarios 1.
Aug 4: Quindio 1 Once Caldas 2; America 3 Indep Santa Fe 2.
Aug 5: Bucaramanga 1 La Equidad 2; At Junior 4 Real Cartagena 2; At Nacional 3 At Huila 2; Tolima 4 Indep Medellin 2; Dep Pasto 3 Cucuta 0; Pereira 0 Chico 1; Millonarios 1 Dep Cali 2.
Aug 8: Quindio 1 Dep Cali 1.
Aug 11: Cucuta 2 Millonarios 2; Once Caldas 2 Dep Pasto 3.
Aug 12: At Huila 1 America 1; Quindio 3 Pereira 1; Dep Cali 1 Tolima 2; Indep Medellin 3 At Junior 1; Indep Santa Fe 4 Bucaramanga 1; La Equidad 3 Chico 1; Real Cartagena 0 At Nacional 2.
Aug 17: Tolima 2 Cucuta 0.
Aug 18: America 1 Real Cartagena 0; Millonarios 1 Once Caldas 2.
Aug 19: Bucaramanga 5 At Huila 0; At Junior 2 Dep Cali 1; At Nacional 1 Indep Medellin 0; Chico 0 Indep Santa Fe 1; Dep Pasto 1 Quindio 2; Pereira 2 La Equidad 2.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	5	4	1	0	8	2	13
Tolima	5	4	0	1	11	4	12
Once Caldas	5	4	0	1	10	5	12
La Equidad	5	3	2	0	8	4	11
Dep Pasto	5	3	1	1	12	8	10
At Junior	5	3	0	2	9	8	9
Quindio	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
America	5	2	1	2	6	6	7
Chico	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Indep Santa Fe	5	2	0	3	8	8	6
Indep Medellin	5	2	0	3	7	8	6
Dep Cali	5	1	2	2	9	10	5
Bucaramanga	5	1	1	3	8	8	4
Millonarios	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
Cucuta	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Pereira	5	1	1	3	4	9	4
At Huila	5	1	1	3	4	12	4
Real Cartagena	5	1	0	4	3	8	3

ECUADOR

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 28: Olmedo 0 Imbabura 0.
July 29: LDU Quito 2 Barcelona 0; Dep Quito 2 Macara 1; Emelec 1 El Nacional 0; Dep Cuenca 3 Dep Azogues 0.
Aug 4: Imbabura 1 Dep Cuenca 1; Macara 1 LDU Quito 3.
Aug 5: Dep Azogues 1 Dep Quito 0; El Nacional 0 Olmedo 0; Emelec 1 Barcelona 2.
Aug 8: El Nacional 3 Macara 1.
Aug 11: Dep Quito 0 Imbabura 1; LDU Quito 0 Dep Azogues 1.
Aug 12: Barcelona 1 Macara 1; Dep Cuenca 2 El Nacional 0; Olmedo 3 Emelec 0.
Aug 15: Dep Azogues 1 Barcelona 2; Emelec 4 Dep Cuenca 0; Imbabura 2 LDU Quito 1; Olmedo 1 Dep Quito 2.
Aug 18: Dep Cuenca 4 Olmedo 0.
Aug 19: Barcelona 2 Imbabura 1; Dep Quito 1 El Nacional 2; LDU Quito 3 Emelec 0; Macara 3 Dep Azogues 2.
Aug 22: Macara 1 El Nacional 1.

ECUADOR – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	9	6	1	2	13	8	19
El Nacional	10	5	2	3	14	11	17
LDU Quito	9	5	0	4	13	8	15
Dep Quito	9	5	0	4	11	9	15
Emelec	9	4	1	4	12	11	13
Dep Cuenca	9	3	2	4	14	13	11
Imbabura	9	2	4	3	8	10	10
Dep Azogues	9	3	1	5	10	15	10
Macara	10	2	4	4	10	16	10
Olmedo	9	2	3	4	5	9	9

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 3: Libertad 3 Cerro Porteno 2.
Aug 4: Sportivo Trinidense 1 Sportivo Luqueno 3.
Aug 5: 2 de Mayo 1 Guarani 1; 3 de Febrero 2 12 de Octubre 2; Nacional 1 Tacuary 0; Sol de America 1 Olimpia 2.
Aug 10: Tacuary 0 2 de Mayo 2.
Aug 11: Guarani 0 Sportivo Trinidense 1; Sol de America 0 3 de Febrero 0; Sportivo Luqueno 0 12 de Octubre 0; Cerro Porteno 1 Nacional 0.
Aug 12: Olimpia 0 Libertad 0.
Aug 15: Libertad 2 Sol de America 1; 12 de Octubre 1 Guarani 0; 3 de Febrero 2 Sportivo Luqueno 0; Nacional 0 Olimpia 0; 2 de Mayo 0 Cerro Porteno 1.
Aug 18: Libertad 2 3 de Febrero 1; Tacuary 1 12 de Octubre 0.
Aug 19: Cerro Porteno 0 Sportivo Trinidense 0; Guarani 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; Olimpia 2 2 de Mayo 0; Sol de America 3 Nacional 3.
Aug 22: Sportivo Trinidense 1 Tacuary 2.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	4	3	1	0	8	4	10
Olimpia	4	2	2	0	4	1	8
Cerro Porteno	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Tacuary	4	2	0	2	3	4	6
3 de Febrero	4	1	2	1	5	4	5
Nacional	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
12 de Octubre	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Luqueno	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
2 de Mayo	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Guarani	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Trinidense	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Sol de America	4	0	2	2	5	8	2

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 28: Dep Municipal 0 Melgar 0; Universitario 1 Coronel Bolognesi 1.
July 29: Sport Ancash 3 Sporting Cristal 1; Total Clean 2 Universidad SMP 0; Sport Boys 0 Cienciano 0.
July 30: Alianza Atletico 0 Alianza Lima 0.
Aug 4: Alianza Lima 2 Total Clean 1; Dep Municipal 3 Alianza Atletico 2; Melgar 0 Universitario 1.
Aug 5: Cienciano 2 Sport Ancash 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Universidad SMP 1.
Aug 8: Alianza Atletico 0 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Universidad SMP 3 Cienciano 1; Sport Ancash 1 Alianza Lima 1; Sport Boys 1 Dep Municipal 1; Total Clean 0 Melgar 0.
Aug 11: Alianza Atletico 2 Sport Boys 1; Melgar 0 Sport Ancash 2.
Aug 12: Alianza Lima 0 Universidad SMP 5; Coronel Bolognesi 3 Total Clean 0; Cienciano 2 Sporting Cristal 0; Dep Municipal 3 Universitario 2.

PERU – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ SMP	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
C Bolognesi	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
Dep Municipal	5	2	2	1	7	6	8
Sport Ancash	5	2	1	2	8	6	7
Universitario	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Cienciano	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
Al Atletico	5	1	3	1	4	4	6
Sport Boys	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Total Clean	5	1	2	2	5	7	5
Al Lima	5	1	2	2	4	9	5
Melgar	5	0	3	2	0	3	3
S Cristal	4	0	2	2	4	8	2

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 18: Wanderers 1 Tacuarembo 1; Defensor 2 Rampla Juniors 1.
Aug 19: River Plate 3 Liverpool 2; Bella Vista 0 Cerro 3; Juventud 0 Danubio 1; Miramar Misiones 1 Progreso 0; Fenix 1 Nacional 1.

URUGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
River Plate	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Defensor	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Danubio	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
M Misiones	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Fenix	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Nacional	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Tacuarembo	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Wanderers	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
C Espanol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penarol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Rampla Jnrs	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Juventud	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Progreso	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Bella Vista	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 4: Trujillanos 2 Portuguesa 0.
Aug 5: Mineros 1 El Vigia 0; Carabobo 1 Dep Italia 0; Caracas 2 Aragua 2; Dep Tachira 6 Estrella Roja 1; Estudiantes 2 Zamora 2; Guaros 2 Monagas 2; Llanero 2 Union Lara 0; Anzoategui 1 UA Maracaibo 1.
Aug 12: Dep Italia 1 Guaros 1; Estrella Roja 0 El Vigia 1; Estudiantes 2 Carabobo 0; Monagas 0 Trujillanos 1; Union Lara 0 Caracas 2; Aragua 1 Mineros 1; UA Maracaibo 3 Llanero 2; Zamora 0 Anzoategui 1.
Aug 17: Llanero 1 Zamora 1.
Aug 18: Dep Tachira 3 Monagas 2; Trujillanos 1 Dep Italia 1.
Aug 19: Mineros 3 Union Lara 3; Anzoategui 3 Estudiantes 0; El Vigia 2 Portuguesa 1; Caracas 0 UA Maracaibo 0; Guaros 3 Carabobo 1; Aragua 3 Estrella Roja 2.

VENEZUELA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anzoategui	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Trujillanos	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Dep Tachira	2	2	0	0	9	3	6
El Vigia	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Guaros	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Caracas	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Aragua	3	1	2	0	6	5	5
Mineros	3	1	2	0	5	4	5
UA Maracaibo	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Llaneros	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Estudiantes	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Carabobo	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Zamora	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Dep Italia	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Monagas	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Union Lara	3	0	1	2	3	7	1
Portuguesa	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Estrella Roja	3	0	0	3	3	10	0

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Aug 3: Tecos UAG 1 Pachuca 4.
Aug 4: Jaguares 1 Atlante 1; Morelia 1 Veracruz 1; Tigres 0 San Luis 0; Atlas 1 Toluca 1.
Aug 5: Pumas UNAM 1 Guadalajara 1; Santos 2 Cruz Azul 0; Necaxa 3 Monterrey 2; Puebla 0 America 0.
Aug 10: Veracruz 2 Atlas 1.
Aug 11: Cruz Azul 1 Tigres 0; Monterrey 2 Puebla 0; San Luis 3 Necaxa 2; Guadalajara 0 Tecos UAG 0; Pachuca 3 Morelia 1; Atlante 1 Pumas UNAM 0.
Aug 12: Toluca 2 Santos 3; America 6 Jaguares 1.
Aug 17: Tecos UAG 0 Atlante 3.
Aug 18: Jaguares 0 Monterrey 0; San Luis 3 Cruz Azul 1; Tigres 0 Toluca 1; Atlas 0 Pachuca 1.
Aug 19: Pumas UNAM 1 America 1; Morelia 1 Guadalajara 0; Necaxa 2 Puebla 1; Santos 2 Veracruz 0.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pachuca	3	3	0	0	8	2	9
Toluca	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Pumas UNAM	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Jaguares	3	0	2	1	2	7	2
Puebla	3	0	1	2	1	4	1
Tecos UAG	3	0	1	2	1	7	1

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Atlante	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
America	3	1	2	0	7	2	5
Monterrey	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Veracruz	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Atlas	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
San Luis	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Necaxa	3	2	0	1	7	6	6
Morelia	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Cruz Azul	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Guadalajara	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Tigres	3	0	1	2	0	2	1

UNITED STATES

July 28: Real Salt Lake 1 New England Revolution 2.
July 29: Kansas City Wizards 3 Chivas USA 2; Toronto FC 0 Chicago Fire 3.
Aug 2: New England Revolution 2 Kansas City Wizards 0.
Aug 4: Real Salt Lake 1 Houston Dynamo 0; FC Dallas 1 Colorado Rapids 0; Chicago Fire 0 Columbus Crew 0.
Aug 5: Toronto FC 0 Los Angeles Galaxy 0; New England Revolution 0 DC United 3.
Aug 9: DC United 1 Los Angeles Galaxy 0.
Aug 11: Colorado Rapids 1 Houston Dynamo 0; FC Dallas 3 Columbus Crew 2.
Aug 12: New England Revolution 1 Los Angeles Galaxy 0; New York Red Bulls 3 Toronto FC 0.
Aug 16: Colorado Rapids 3 New England Revolution 0.
Aug 18: Real Salt Lake 0 Chicago Fire 2; New York Red Bulls 5 Los Angeles Galaxy 4; Columbus Crew 0 DC United 2; Toronto FC 0 Chivas USA 2.
Aug 19: Kansas City Wizards 0 New England Revolution 1; Houston Dynamo 1 FC Dallas 0.
Aug 22: Kansas City Wizards 3 Chicago Fire 2; DC United 3 New York Red Bulls 1.
Aug 23: Los Angeles Galaxy 0 Chivas USA 3.

UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New England	22	11	6	5	35	27	39
DC United	20	11	3	6	35	23	36
New York	21	10	3	8	35	30	33
Kansas City	21	9	5	7	35	31	32
Columbus	21	6	8	7	25	28	26
Chicago Fire	20	6	5	9	20	29	23
Toronto FC	21	5	5	11	18	34	20

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Houston	22	11	4	7	29	15	37
FC Dallas	21	11	3	7	28	27	36
Chivas USA	19	10	3	6	29	19	33
Colorado	21	6	6	9	20	25	24
LA Galaxy	17	3	5	9	21	28	14
Real Salt Lake	18	2	6	10	14	28	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS

14 Luciano Emilio (DC United)
13 Juan Pablo Angel (New York Red Bulls)
12 Eddie Johnson (Kansas City Wizards)
10 Maykel Galindo (Chivas USA)
10 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Aug 3: Al Ittihad (Lby) 2 FAR Rabat (Mor) 0; JS Kabylie (Alg) 0 Etoile Sahel (Tun) 2.
Aug 17: JS Kabylie 3 Al Ittihad 1.
Aug 18: Etoile Sahel 0 FAR Rabat 0.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Etoile Sahel	5	3	2	0	6	0	11
Al Ittihad	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
JS Kabylie	5	2	0	3	5	7	6
FAR Rabat	5	1	1	3	1	5	4

Group B

Aug 4: Esperance (Tun) 1 Al Ahly (Egy) 0.
Aug 5: ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 1 Al Hilal (Sud) 0.
Aug 19: ASEC Abidjan 2 Esperance 0; Al Hilal 3 Al Ahly 0.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	5	3	0	2	7	4	9
Al Ahly	5	3	0	2	6	4	9
ASEC Abidjan	5	2	1	2	4	3	7
Esperance	5	1	1	3	1	7	4

Top two in each group qualify for semi-finals

CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

Aug 4: CS Sfaxien (Tun) 4 Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 0.
Aug 5: TP Mazembe (DRC) 2 Astres (Cam) 1.
Aug 18: Mamelodi Sundowns 2 Astres 1.
Aug 19: TP Mazembe 2 CS Sfaxien 1.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
M Sundowns	3	2	0	1	5	7	6
CS Sfaxien	3	1	1	1	6	3	4
Astres	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

Group B

Aug 4: Al Merreikh (Sud) 6 Dolphin (Nig) 1; Kwara United (Nig) 1 Ismaili (Egy) 1.
Aug 18: Kwara United 2 Al Merreikh 1.
Aug 19: Dolphin 2 Ismaili 0.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dolphin	3	2	0	1	5	6	6
Al Merreikh	3	1	1	1	8	4	4
Kwara United	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Ismaili	3	0	2	1	2	4	2

ASIA

CHINA

Aug 7: Changchun 4 Shenzhen 0.
Aug 8: Xian 2 Wuhan 0; Shenyang 0 Xiamen 0; Tianjin 0 Henan 0; Shandong 1 Beijing 6; Liaoning 0 Zhejiang 0.
Aug 9: Qingdao 1 Dalian 2.
Aug 11: Tianjin 2 Wuhan 0; Liaoning 2 Shandong 1; Changchun 2 Xiamen 1.
Aug 12: Xian 1 Shenzhen 1; Dalian 1 Shenyang 0; Qingdao 2 Zhejiang 1; Beijing 2 Shanghai 3.
Aug 18: Liaoning 0 Qingdao 0; Shandong 2 Shanghai 1; Shenzhen 1 Tianjin 1; Changchun 1 Dalian 2; Zhejiang 2 Shenyang 0.
Aug 19: Henan 1 Beijing 2.
Aug 22: Tianjin 2 Xiamen 0; Xian 2 Dalian 2; Beijing 4 Wuhan 1; Shenyang 1 Liaoning 0; Qingdao 0 Shandong 4; Changchun 1 Zhejiang 1; Shanghai 1 Henan 1.

CHINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Changchun	17	10	3	4	29	17	33
Shandong	17	10	2	5	37	23	32
Dalian	17	9	5	3	21	16	32
Tianjin	17	9	3	5	20	12	30
Beijing	17	7	7	3	27	14	28
Shanghai	17	8	4	5	23	21	28
Qingdao	17	7	3	7	23	24	24
Liaoning	17	7	3	7	15	20	24
Wuhan	16	6	4	6	19	20	22
Shenyang	17	5	5	7	11	16	20
Zhejiang	17	4	5	8	18	25	17
Shenzhen	16	3	6	7	11	20	15
Xian	16	2	7	7	12	19	13
Henan	16	1	8	7	8	16	11
Xiamen	16	2	5	9	13	24	11

JAPAN

Aug 1: Urawa Reds 4 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1.
Aug 11: Urawa Reds 1 Kashiwa Reysol 1; JEF United 1 Kawasaki Frontale 3; FC Tokyo 1 Oita Trinita 2; Yokohama F Marinos 8 Yokohama FC 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Omiya Ardija 2; Gamba Osaka 3 Albirex Niigata 1; Vissel Kobe 4 Jubilo Iwata 0.
Aug 12: Ventforet Kofu 0 Kashima Antlers 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 3.
Aug 15: Kashima Antlers 3 JEF United 1; Omiya Ardija 1 Vissel Kobe 3; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0; Kawasaki Frontale 1 Yokohama F Marinos 2; Yokohama FC 0 Ventforet Kofu 2; Albirex Niigata 4 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Jubilo Iwata 5 FC Tokyo 2; Gamba Osaka 0 Urawa Reds 1; Oita Trinita 3 Shimizu S-Pulse 4.
Aug 18: JEF United 3 Jubilo Iwata 2; FC Tokyo 0 Kashiwa Reysol 1; Yokohama FC 1 Gamba Osaka 1; Ventforet Kofu 1 Urawa Reds 4; Shimizu S-Pulse 3 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 0 Yokohama F Marinos 3; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Oita Trinita 0.
Aug 19: Omiya Ardija 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Vissel Kobe 0 Albirex Niigata 1.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa Reds	21	13	7	1	37	16	46
Gamba Osaka	21	13	6	2	45	20	45
Kashima	21	11	6	4	32	20	39
Albirex Niigata	21	11	5	5	36	29	38
Yokohama FM	21	10	5	6	38	18	35
Shimizu SP	21	10	5	6	34	26	35
Kashiwa	21	9	6	6	28	18	33
Kawasaki	21	8	7	6	37	29	31
Jubilo Iwata	21	10	1	10	37	40	31
Vissel Kobe	21	8	5	8	34	30	29
Grampus Eight	21	8	2	11	26	30	26
Sanfrecce	21	7	4	10	31	43	25
FC Tokyo	21	7	2	12	26	38	23
JEF United	21	6	4	11	27	36	22
Ventforet	21	6	3	12	25	40	21
Oita Trinita	21	5	4	12	23	40	19
Omiya Ardija	21	3	8	10	14	26	17
Yokohama FC	21	3	2	16	15	46	11

SOUTH KOREA

Aug 8: Pohang 2 Gyeongnam 1; Songnam 2 Jeju 0; Suwon 2 Chonbuk 3; Gwangju 0 Busan 3; Incheon 2 Daegu 1; Ulsan 2 Daejeon 1; Seoul 1 Chunnam 0.
Aug 11: Gyeongnam 0 Incheon 0; Gwangju 0 Songnam 1; Busan 1 Suwon 2.
Aug 12: Daejeon 3 Pohang 0; Chunnam 3 Daegu 2; Jeju 2 Seoul 2; Chonbuk 0 Ulsan 0.
Aug 15: Incheon 2 Chunnam 1; Gyeongnam 1 Daejeon 2; Daegu 3 Jeju 0; Pohang 1 Chonbuk 3; Seoul 0 Gwangju 0; Suwon 2 Songnam 1; Ulsan 0 Busan 0.
Aug 18: Gwangju 2 Daegu 1; Busan 1 Pohang 2.
Aug 19: Jeju 2 Chunnam 1; Daejeon 0 Incheon 1; Chonbuk 2 Gyeongnam 3; Suwon 2 Seoul 1; Songnam 1 Ulsan 1.

SOUTH KOREA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam	17	11	5	1	29	9	38
Suwon	17	10	4	3	28	18	34
Ulsan	17	7	7	3	21	16	28
Chonbuk	17	8	3	6	27	21	27
Gyeongnam	17	7	4	6	28	22	25
Incheon	17	6	5	6	19	20	23
Pohang	17	6	5	6	16	19	23
Chunnam	17	5	7	5	18	18	22
Seoul	17	4	10	3	11	11	22
Daejeon	17	4	7	6	18	18	19
Jeju	17	5	3	9	14	23	18
Daegu	17	4	4	9	22	29	16
Busan	17	3	5	9	16	24	14
Gwangju	17	2	5	10	9	28	11

FIXTURES

ITALY

Saturday, August 25, 2007
Juventus v Livorno
Lazio v Torino

Sunday, August 26
Fiorentina v Empoli
Genoa v Milan
Inter v Udinese
Napoli v Cagliari
Palermo v Roma
Parma v Catania
Reggina v Atalanta
Siena v Sampdoria

Saturday, September 1
Empoli v Inter

Sunday, September 2
Atalanta v Parma
Cagliari v Juventus
Catania v Genoa
Livorno v Palermo
Roma v Siena
Sampdoria v Lazio
Torino v Reggina
Udinese v Napoli

Monday, September 3
Milan v Fiorentina

Sunday, September 16
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Genoa v Livorno
Inter v Catania
Juventus v Udinese
Lazio v Empoli
Napoli v Sampdoria
Palermo v Torino
Parma v Cagliari
Reggina v Roma
Siena v Milan

Sunday, September 23
Atalanta v Lazio
Cagliari v Palermo
Catania v Fiorentina
Empoli v Napoli
Livorno v Inter
Milan v Parma
Roma v Juventus
Sampdoria v Genoa
Torino v Siena
Udinese v Reggina

Wednesday, September 26
Catania v Empoli
Fiorentina v Roma
Genoa v Udinese
Inter v Sampdoria
Juventus v Reggina
Lazio v Cagliari
Napoli v Livorno
Palermo v Milan
Parma v Torino
Siena v Atalanta

Sunday, September 30
Cagliari v Siena
Empoli v Palermo
Livorno v Fiorentina
Milan v Catania
Napoli v Genoa
Reggina v Lazio
Roma v Inter
Sampdoria v Atalanta
Torino v Juventus
Udinese v Parma

Sunday, October 7
Atalanta v Udinese
Catania v Livorno
Fiorentina v Juventus
Genoa v Cagliari
Inter v Napoli
Lazio v Milan
Palermo v Reggina
Parma v Roma
Siena v Empoli
Torino v Sampdoria

Sunday, October 21
Atalanta v Torino
Cagliari v Catania
Fiorentina v Siena
Juventus v Genoa
Livorno v Lazio
Milan v Empoli
Reggina v Inter
Roma v Napoli
Sampdoria v Parma
Udinese v Palermo

Sunday, October 28
Catania v Sampdoria
Empoli v Atalanta
Genoa v Fiorentina
Lazio v Udinese
Milan v Roma
Napoli v Juventus
Palermo v Inter
Parma v Livorno
Siena v Reggina
Torino v Cagliari

Wednesday, October 31
Atalanta v Cagliari
Fiorentina v Napoli
Inter v Genoa
Juventus v Empoli
Palermo v Parma
Reggina v Livorno
Roma v Lazio
Sampdoria v Milan
Siena v Catania
Udinese v Torino

Sunday, November 4
Cagliari v Sampdoria
Catania v Atalanta
Empoli v Roma
Genoa v Palermo
Juventus v Inter
Lazio v Fiorentina
Livorno v Udinese
Milan v Torino
Napoli v Reggina
Parma v Siena

Sunday, November 11
Atalanta v Milan
Fiorentina v Udinese
Inter v Lazio
Palermo v Napoli
Parma v Juventus
Reggina v Genoa
Roma v Cagliari
Sampdoria v Empoli
Siena v Livorno
Torino v Catania

Sunday, November 25
Cagliari v Milan
Empoli v Torino
Genoa v Roma
Inter v Atalanta
Juventus v Palermo
Lazio v Parma
Livorno v Sampdoria
Napoli v Catania
Reggina v Fiorentina
Udinese v Siena

Sunday, December 2
Atalanta v Napoli
Cagliari v Livorno
Catania v Palermo
Fiorentina v Inter
Milan v Juventus
Parma v Empoli
Roma v Udinese
Sampdoria v Reggina
Siena v Lazio
Torino v Genoa

Sunday, December 9
Empoli v Cagliari
Genoa v Siena
Inter v Torino
Juventus v Atalanta
Lazio v Catania
Livorno v Roma
Napoli v Parma
Palermo v Fiorentina
Reggina v Milan
Udinese v Sampdoria

Sunday, December 16
Atalanta v Palermo
Cagliari v Inter
Catania v Udinese
Empoli v Genoa
Lazio v Juventus
Milan v Livorno
Parma v Reggina
Sampdoria v Fiorentina
Siena v Napoli
Torino v Roma

Sunday, December 23
Fiorentina v Cagliari
Genoa v Parma
Inter v Milan
Juventus v Siena
Livorno v Atalanta
Napoli v Torino
Palermo v Lazio
Reggina v Catania
Roma v Sampdoria
Udinese v Empoli

Sunday, January 13, 2008
Atalanta v Roma
Cagliari v Udinese
Catania v Juventus
Empoli v Reggina
Lazio v Genoa
Milan v Napoli
Parma v Fiorentina
Sampdoria v Palermo
Siena v Inter
Torino v Livorno

Sunday, January 20
Fiorentina v Torino
Genoa v Atalanta
Inter v Parma
Juventus v Sampdoria
Livorno v Empoli
Napoli v Lazio
Palermo v Siena
Reggina v Cagliari
Roma v Catania
Udinese v Milan

Sunday, January 27
Empoli v Fiorentina
Milan v Genoa
Udinese v Inter
Livorno v Juventus
Torino v Lazio
Cagliari v Napoli
Roma v Palermo
Catania v Parma
Atalanta v Reggina
Sampdoria v Siena

Sunday, February 3
Parma v Atalanta
Juventus v Cagliari
Genoa v Catania
Inter v Empoli
Palermo v Livorno
Fiorentina v Milan
Siena v Roma
Lazio v Sampdoria
Reggina v Torino
Napoli v Udinese

Sunday, February 10
Atalanta v Fiorentina
Livorno v Genoa
Catania v Inter
Udinese v Juventus
Empoli v Lazio
Sampdoria v Napoli
Torino v Palermo
Cagliari v Parma
Roma v Reggina
Milan v Siena

Sunday, February 17
Lazio v Atalanta
Palermo v Cagliari
Fiorentina v Catania
Napoli v Empoli
Inter v Livorno
Parma v Milan
Juventus v Roma
Genoa v Sampdoria
Siena v Torino
Reggina v Udinese

Sunday, February 24
Empoli v Catania
Roma v Fiorentina
Udinese v Genoa
Sampdoria v Inter
Reggina v Juventus
Cagliari v Lazio
Livorno v Napoli
Milan v Palermo
Torino v Parma
Atalanta v Siena

Wednesday, February 27
Siena v Cagliari
Palermo v Empoli
Fiorentina v Livorno
Catania v Milan
Genoa v Napoli
Lazio v Reggina
Inter v Roma
Atalanta v Sampdoria
Juventus v Torino
Parma v Udinese

Sunday, March 2
Udinese v Atalanta
Livorno v Catania
Juventus v Fiorentina
Cagliari v Genoa
Napoli v Inter
Milan v Lazio
Reggina v Palermo
Roma v Parma
Empoli v Siena
Sampdoria v Torino

Sunday, March 9
Torino v Atalanta
Catania v Cagliari
Siena v Fiorentina
Genoa v Juventus
Lazio v Livorno
Empoli v Milan
Inter v Reggina
Napoli v Roma
Parma v Sampdoria
Palermo v Udinese

Sunday, March 16
Sampdoria v Catania
Atalanta v Empoli
Fiorentina v Genoa
Udinese v Lazio
Roma v Milan
Juventus v Napoli
Inter v Palermo
Livorno v Parma
Reggina v Siena
Cagliari v Torino

Wednesday, March 19
Cagliari v Atalanta
Napoli v Fiorentina
Genoa v Inter
Empoli v Juventus
Parma v Palermo
Livorno v Reggina
Lazio v Roma
Milan v Sampdoria
Catania v Siena
Torino v Udinese

Saturday, March 22
Sampdoria v Cagliari
Atalanta v Catania
Roma v Empoli
Palermo v Genoa
Inter v Juventus
Fiorentina v Lazio
Udinese v Livorno
Torino v Milan
Reggina v Napoli
Siena v Parma

Sunday, March 30
Milan v Atalanta
Udinese v Fiorentina
Lazio v Inter
Napoli v Palermo
Juventus v Parma
Genoa v Reggina
Cagliari v Roma
Empoli v Sampdoria
Livorno v Siena
Catania v Torino

Sunday, April 6
Milan v Cagliari
Torino v Empoli
Roma v Genoa
Atalanta v Inter
Palermo v Juventus
Parma v Lazio
Sampdoria v Livorno
Catania v Napoli
Fiorentina v Reggina
Siena v Udinese

Sunday, April 13
Napoli v Atalanta
Livorno v Cagliari
Palermo v Catania
Inter v Fiorentina
Juventus v Milan
Empoli v Parma
Udinese v Roma
Reggina v Sampdoria
Lazio v Siena
Genoa v Torino

Sunday, April 20
Cagliari v Empoli
Siena v Genoa
Torino v Inter
Atalanta v Juventus
Catania v Lazio
Roma v Livorno
Parma v Napoli
Fiorentina v Palermo
Milan v Reggina
Sampdoria v Udinese

Sunday, April 27
Palermo v Atalanta
Inter v Cagliari
Udinese v Catania
Genoa v Empoli
Juventus v Lazio
Livorno v Milan
Reggina v Parma
Fiorentina v Sampdoria
Napoli v Siena
Roma v Torino

Sunday, May 4
Cagliari v Fiorentina
Parma v Genoa
Milan v Inter
Siena v Juventus
Atalanta v Livorno
Torino v Napoli
Lazio v Palermo
Catania v Reggina
Sampdoria v Roma
Empoli v Udinese

Sunday, May 11
Roma v Atalanta
Udinese v Cagliari
Juventus v Catania
Reggina v Empoli
Genoa v Lazio
Napoli v Milan
Fiorentina v Parma
Palermo v Sampdoria
Inter v Siena
Livorno v Torino

Sunday, May 18
Torino v Fiorentina
Atalanta v Genoa
Parma v Inter
Sampdoria v Juventus
Empoli v Livorno
Lazio v Napoli
Siena v Palermo
Cagliari v Reggina
Catania v Roma
Milan v Udinese

SPAIN

Saturday, August 25, 2007
Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid
Sevilla v Getafe
Murcia v Zaragoza

Sunday, August 26
Athletic Bilbao v Osasuna
Deportivo La Coruna v Almeria
Espanyol v Valladolid
Racing Santander v Barcelona
Valencia v Villarreal
Mallorca v Levante
Recreativo v Betis

Sunday, September 2
Atletico Madrid v Mallorca
Barcelona v Athletic Bilbao
Betis v Espanyol
Valladolid v Deportivo La Coruna
Zaragoza v Racing Santander
Almeria v Valencia
Getafe v Recreativo
Levante v Murcia
Osasuna v Sevilla
Villarreal v Real Madrid

Sunday, September 16
Athletic Bilbao v Zaragoza
Deportivo La Coruna v Betis
Espanyol v Getafe
Racing Santander v Levante
Real Madrid v Almeria
Sevilla v Recreativo
Valencia v Valladolid
Mallorca v Villarreal
Osasuna v Barcelona
Murcia v Atletico Madrid

Sunday, September 23
Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander
Barcelona v Sevilla
Betis v Valencia
Valladolid v Real Madrid
Zaragoza v Osasuna
Almeria v Mallorca
Getafe v Deportivo La Coruna
Levante v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Murcia
Recreativo v Espanyol

Wednesday, September 26
Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid
Barcelona v Zaragoza
Deportivo La Coruna v Recreativo
Racing Santander v Villarreal
Real Madrid v Betis
Sevilla v Espanyol
Valencia v Getafe
Mallorca v Valladolid
Osasuna v Levante
Murcia v Almeria

Sunday, September 30
Atletico Madrid v Osasuna
Betis v Mallorca
Espanyol v Deportivo La Coruna
Valladolid v Murcia
Zaragoza v Sevilla
Almeria v Racing Santander
Getafe v Real Madrid
Levante v Barcelona
Villarreal v Athletic Bilbao
Recreativo v Valencia

Sunday, October 7
Athletic Bilbao v Almeria
Barcelona v Atletico Madrid
Racing Santander v Valladolid
Real Madrid v Recreativo
Sevilla v Deportivo La Coruna
Valencia v Espanyol
Zaragoza v Levante
Mallorca v Getafe
Osasuna v Villarreal
Murcia v Betis

Sunday, October 21
Atletico Madrid v Zaragoza
Betis v Racing Santander
Deportivo La Coruna v Valencia
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao
Almeria v Osasuna
Getafe v Murcia
Levante v Sevilla
Villarreal v Barcelona
Recreativo v Mallorca

Sunday, October 28
Athletic Bilbao v Betis
Barcelona v Almeria
Racing Santander v Getafe
Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Sevilla v Valencia
Zaragoza v Villarreal
Levante v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Espanyol
Osasuna v Valladolid
Murcia v Recreativo

Wednesday, October 31
Atletico Madrid v Sevilla
Betis v Osasuna
Deportivo La Coruna v Mallorca
Espanyol v Murcia
Valladolid v Barcelona
Valencia v Real Madrid
Almeria v Zaragoza
Getafe v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Levante
Recreativo v Racing Santander

Sunday, November 4
Athletic Bilbao v Recreativo
Atletico Madrid v Villarreal
Barcelona v Betis
Racing Santander v Espanyol
Sevilla v Real Madrid
Zaragoza v Valladolid
Levante v Almeria
Mallorca v Valencia
Osasuna v Getafe
Murcia v Deportivo La Coruna

Sunday, November 11
Betis v Zaragoza
Deportivo La Coruna v Racing Santander
Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao
Real Madrid v Mallorca
Valladolid v Levante
Valencia v Murcia
Almeria v Atletico Madrid
Getafe v Barcelona
Villarreal v Sevilla
Recreativo v Osasuna

Sunday, November 25
Athletic Bilbao v Deportivo La Coruna
Atletico Madrid v Valladolid
Barcelona v Recreativo
Racing Santander v Valencia
Sevilla v Mallorca
Zaragoza v Getafe
Levante v Betis
Osasuna v Espanyol
Villarreal v Almeria
Murcia v Real Madrid

Sunday, December 2
Betis v Atletico Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Osasuna
Espanyol v Barcelona
Real Madrid v Racing Santander
Valladolid v Villarreal
Valencia v Athletic Bilbao
Almeria v Sevilla
Getafe v Levante
Mallorca v Murcia
Recreativo v Zaragoza

Sunday, December 9
Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid
Atletico Madrid v Getafe
Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna
Racing Santander v Mallorca
Sevilla v Murcia
Zaragoza v Espanyol
Almeria v Valladolid
Levante v Recreativo
Osasuna v Valencia
Villarreal v Betis

Sunday, December 16
Betis v Almeria
Deportivo La Coruna v Zaragoza
Espanyol v Levante
Real Madrid v Osasuna
Valladolid v Sevilla
Valencia v Barcelona
Getafe v Villarreal
Mallorca v Athletic Bilbao
Murcia v Racing Santander
Recreativo v Atletico Madrid

Sunday, December 23
Athletic Bilbao v Murcia
Atletico Madrid v Espanyol
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Sevilla v Racing Santander
Valladolid v Betis
Zaragoza v Valencia
Almeria v Getafe
Levante v Deportivo La Coruna
Osasuna v Mallorca
Villarreal v Recreativo

Sunday, January 6, 2008
Deportivo La Coruna v Atletico Madrid
Espanyol v Villarreal
Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao
Real Madrid v Zaragoza
Sevilla v Betis
Valencia v Levante
Getafe v Valladolid
Mallorca v Barcelona
Murcia v Osasuna
Recreativo v Almeria

Sunday, January 13
Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla
Atletico Madrid v Valencia
Barcelona v Murcia
Betis v Getafe
Valladolid v Recreativo
Zaragoza v Mallorca
Almeria v Espanyol
Levante v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Racing Santander
Villarreal v Deportivo La Coruna

Sunday, January 20
Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid
Barcelona v Racing Santander
Betis v Recreativo
Valladolid v Espanyol
Zaragoza v Murcia
Almeria v Deportivo La Coruna
Getafe v Sevilla
Levante v Mallorca
Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Valencia

Sunday, January 27
Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona
Deportivo La Coruna v Valladolid
Espanyol v Betis
Racing Santander v Zaragoza
Real Madrid v Villarreal
Sevilla v Osasuna
Valencia v Almeria
Mallorca v Atletico Madrid
Murcia v Levante
Recreativo v Getafe

Sunday, February 3
Atletico Madrid v Murcia
Barcelona v Osasuna
Betis v Deportivo La Coruna
Valladolid v Valencia
Zaragoza v Athletic Bilbao
Almeria v Real Madrid
Getafe v Espanyol
Levante v Racing Santander
Villarreal v Mallorca
Recreativo v Sevilla

Sunday, February 10
Athletic Bilbao v Levante
Deportivo La Coruna v Getafe
Espanyol v Recreativo
Racing Santander v Atletico Madrid
Real Madrid v Valladolid
Sevilla v Barcelona
Valencia v Betis
Mallorca v Almeria
Osasuna v Zaragoza
Murcia v Villarreal

Sunday, February 17
Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Betis v Real Madrid
Espanyol v Sevilla
Valladolid v Mallorca
Zaragoza v Barcelona
Almeria v Murcia
Getafe v Valencia
Levante v Osasuna
Villarreal v Racing Santander
Recreativo v Deportivo La Coruna

Sunday, February 24
Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal
Barcelona v Levante
Deportivo La Coruna v Espanyol
Racing Santander v Almeria
Real Madrid v Getafe
Sevilla v Zaragoza
Valencia v Recreativo
Mallorca v Betis
Osasuna v Atletico Madrid
Murcia v Valladolid

Sunday, March 2
Atletico Madrid v Barcelona
Betis v Murcia
Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla
Espanyol v Valencia
Valladolid v Racing Santander
Almeria v Athletic Bilbao
Getafe v Mallorca
Levante v Zaragoza
Villarreal v Osasuna
Recreativo v Real Madrid

Sunday, March 9
Athletic Bilbao v Valladolid
Barcelona v Villarreal
Racing Santander v Betis
Real Madrid v Espanyol
Sevilla v Levante
Valencia v Deportivo La Coruna
Zaragoza v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Recreativo
Osasuna v Almeria
Murcia v Getafe

Sunday, March 16
Atletico Madrid v Levante
Betis v Athletic Bilbao
Deportivo La Coruna v Real Madrid
Espanyol v Mallorca
Valladolid v Osasuna
Valencia v Sevilla
Almeria v Barcelona
Getafe v Racing Santander
Villarreal v Zaragoza
Recreativo v Murcia

Sunday, March 23
Athletic Bilbao v Getafe
Barcelona v Valladolid
Racing Santander v Recreativo
Real Madrid v Valencia
Sevilla v Atletico Madrid
Zaragoza v Almeria
Levante v Villarreal
Mallorca v Deportivo La Coruna
Osasuna v Betis
Murcia v Espanyol

Sunday, March 30
Betis v Barcelona
Deportivo La Coruna v Murcia
Espanyol v Racing Santander
Real Madrid v Sevilla
Valladolid v Zaragoza
Valencia v Mallorca
Almeria v Levante
Getafe v Osasuna
Villarreal v Atletico Madrid
Recreativo v Athletic Bilbao

Sunday, April 6
Athletic Bilbao v Espanyol
Atletico Madrid v Almeria
Barcelona v Getafe
Racing Santander v Deportivo La Coruna
Sevilla v Villarreal
Zaragoza v Betis
Levante v Valladolid
Mallorca v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Recreativo
Murcia v Valencia

Sunday, April 13
Betis v Levante
Deportivo La Coruna v Athletic Bilbao
Espanyol v Osasuna
Real Madrid v Murcia
Valladolid v Atletico Madrid
Valencia v Racing Santander
Almeria v Villarreal
Getafe v Zaragoza
Mallorca v Sevilla
Recreativo v Barcelona

Sunday, April 20
Athletic Bilbao v Valencia
Atletico Madrid v Betis
Barcelona v Espanyol
Racing Santander v Real Madrid
Sevilla v Almeria
Zaragoza v Recreativo
Levante v Getafe
Osasuna v Deportivo La Coruna
Villarreal v Valladolid
Murcia v Mallorca

Sunday, April 27
Betis v Villarreal
Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona
Espanyol v Zaragoza
Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Valladolid v Almeria
Valencia v Osasuna
Getafe v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Racing Santander
Murcia v Sevilla
Recreativo v Levante

Sunday, May 4
Athletic Bilbao v Mallorca
Atletico Madrid v Recreativo
Barcelona v Valencia
Racing Santander v Murcia
Sevilla v Valladolid
Zaragoza v Deportivo La Coruna
Almeria v Betis
Levante v Espanyol
Osasuna v Real Madrid
Villarreal v Getafe

Wednesday, May 7
Betis v Valladolid
Deportivo La Coruna v Levante
Espanyol v Atletico Madrid
Racing Santander v Sevilla
Real Madrid v Barcelona
Valencia v Zaragoza
Getafe v Almeria
Mallorca v Osasuna
Murcia v Athletic Bilbao
Recreativo v Villarreal

Sunday, May 11
Athletic Bilbao v Racing Santander
Atletico Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Barcelona v Mallorca
Betis v Sevilla
Valladolid v Getafe
Zaragoza v Real Madrid
Almeria v Recreativo
Levante v Valencia
Osasuna v Murcia
Villarreal v Espanyol

Sunday, May 18
Deportivo La Coruna v Villarreal
Espanyol v Almeria
Racing Santander v Osasuna
Real Madrid v Levante
Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao
Valencia v Atletico Madrid
Getafe v Betis
Mallorca v Zaragoza
Murcia v Barcelona
Recreativo v Valladolid

The midfield enforcer: Gennaro Gattuso

The Milan man was judged best by his fellow players

CHARACTER
"For me his most important trait is his selflessness. Personal concerns come a distant second to the good of the team. He doesn't care if others have more headlines or that his job isn't so glamorous. He's proud to sacrifice himself for a winning team, he's sensitive to the needs of his colleagues. Every team needs a guy like him, someone willing to go through the pain barrier. He's the same off the pitch in his charity work for needy kids in his native Calabria."

COMPETITIVENESS
"All professional players have a deep desire to be winners. But he takes his intensity to another level. He's so single-minded but at the same time is never cold in temperament. He rides his emotions on the field, and this enthusiasm communicates itself to team-mates and to the fans, who adore him."

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES
"He has the perfect build for a defensive midfielder, short and stocky. I'm always astonished by his stamina. He just never stops running and chasing. I've never been sure if he just has more energy or if his will is so strong that he will not let himself tire."

INTELLIGENCE
"He's not blindly aggressive. There's a lot of method to his game. Tactically, he's strong and has the ability to quickly spot and react to dangerous situations. He plays with his heart and his head."

TECHNIQUE
"People describe him as a pitbull or a snarler and they see only this side of him. They skate over the technical ability he has. I know from first hand how hard he has worked to improve his skills. He can pick out a pass, his control is good and he has a powerful shot. Over the years, he has become increasingly confident on the ball. You don't survive for so long at the top level if you have square feet."

Former Milan team-mate Alessandro Costacurta on Gennaro Gattuso

WHAT THEY SAID

PAULETA (above)
(PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN)
"Claude Makelele [Chelsea] is absolutely tireless and spots dangerous situations so early."

GAEL GIVET
(MARSEILLE)
"Esteban Cambiasso does not receive nearly enough praise for the job he does for Argentina and Inter. His distribution is good, and he's great at breaking up attacks."

KIM KALLSTROM
(LYON)
"Gennaro Gattuso [Milan] plays every game as though it were his last. When you have such an intense competitor in your side, everybody else raises their game."

ULRICH RAME
(BORDEAUX)
"There's no one better than Gennaro Gattuso at pressurising opponents and winning the ball. He's an Italian who plays like an Anglo-Saxon."

JORIS MATHIJSEN (below)
(HAMBURG)
"Michael Essien [Chelsea] is so strong that opponents bounce off him. On the rare occasion when he is beaten, he's back fighting for the ball in an instant."

YILDIRAY BASTURK
(STUTTGART)
"I always have the feeling watching Patrick Vieira [Inter] that he can't be passed, that he's too tall, strong, quick and determined."

TOMAS GALASEK
(NURNBERG)
"Some say Patrick Vieira is not as good as he was in his days at Arsenal. I don't agree. He's still able to dominate the middle of the park with his extraordinary physical qualities."

LUCIO (above)
(BAYERN MUNICH)
"Gennaro Gattuso is not beautiful to watch but every team needs a born battler like him. He's the best in the business. His commitment is frightening."

PETRI PASANEN
(WERDER BREMEN)
"Gilberto Silva [Arsenal] does a great job as the midfield anchor man. He is good tactically and selfless. Defensive midfielders don't have egos."

GERALD ASAMOAH
(SCHALKE)
"Michael Essien is one of those forces of nature who's been given extra strength, endurance and drive. But he can play, too."

THE VOTES
3...Gattuso
2...Essien, Vieira
1...Cambiasso, Gilberto Silva, Makelele

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